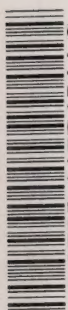


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# THE MICMAC



*Micmac cooking trough with stones*



The Micmac Indians are the first known inhabitants of what is now Nova Scotia. They are Algonkian speakers who were once widespread in eastern Canada. When the white man arrived in North America the Micmac, whose population is estimated to have been between 3,000 and 3,500, were distributed throughout what is now the province of Nova Scotia, including Cape Breton Island; their population extended into the northern part of present-day New Brunswick, and into Prince Edward Island. In the mid-sixteenth century they expanded their territory as far as the Gaspé district of modern Québec and to Newfoundland.

At that time, a district chief and local chiefs made up the political system. The district chiefs planned the seasonal movements of the people and also confirmed and reassigned hunting territories. They designated work for their immediate relatives, their wives, children and escorts. The escorts were young men who hunted with, and learned from, the chief. The district chiefs also had the responsibility of providing their people with hunting dogs, canoes and provisions for expeditions, especially when the weather was bad.

The local chiefs made decisions at the Council of Chiefs which met at specified times of the year to discuss peace and war. To become chief a man had to display his ability and courage both in hunting and in war; he

also had to be generous to his people. To gain power and authority, the chiefs practiced polygamy, which resulted in the fathering of many children. Children were considered a man's wealth.

Men of special ability among the Micmac Indians led warriors into battle against the Algonkian tribes to the south, the Iroquoian tribes then in the St. Lawrence Valley, and the Eskimo and Montagnais to the north. They also fought against the Beothuk in Newfoundland, whom they helped to exterminate. Before battle Micmac warriors held mock fights in which they argued for and against the tactics of their war parties. In war, victories were celebrated with feasts and dances. Male prisoners were usually killed, but women and children captured in battle were taken into the tribe.

Marriage was a solemn affair. For one year before the marriage, the prospective groom lived with the parents of his future bride, serving them. Micmac law allowed divorce when husband and wife no longer had affection for each other or when the wife could not have children. Funerals were elaborate, with many ceremonies. The dead were wrapped in birch bark rolls and placed in a sitting position in shallow graves. Their personal implements were either burned or buried with them for use in the after-life.



*Micmac canoe*





*Micmac splint basket*

As was the custom with other Algonkian Indians, Micmac youths probably fasted in order to obtain through dreams and visions the guardian spirit which would bring them luck throughout their lives. Special shamans or medicine men performed rituals which were believed to help cure disease.

The Micmac economy was traditionally based on hunting, gathering and fishing. In winter the Indians lived in the woods, where they stalked moose and caribou on snowshoes, killing them with spears or arrows. Smaller animals such as porcupine also formed part of their winter diet. In the spring the Micmac people moved to the seashore to gather shellfish and to fish for salmon, bass and trout at the mouths of the rivers. They also hunted seals and porpoises off the coast from their birch bark canoes.

Birch bark was an important material in Micmac society. They lived in wigwams covered with birch bark; they used birch bark for their canoes and fashioned household utensils, such as food containers and storage baskets, from it. To cook, they made large wooden troughs, added water and hot stones, and thus boiled their food.

Individuals belonged to one of several bands; Micmac social organization was not particularly complex. Each band had a defined territory of its own, and band

members seem to have had distinctive symbols which they not only tattooed on their bodies, but also painted or quilled onto their clothing, using porcupine quills. These symbols were also carved or painted on ornaments, canoes, snowshoes and other personal belongings. Even today, Micmac beadwork, leatherwork and basketry can be identified by traditional designs.

It was the early explorers and missionaries who first reported that the Micmac embroidered coloured quills and moose hair onto their clothing and other personal items. Vegetable dye was used to colour porcupine quills and moose hair, which decorated birch bark baskets. This embroidery technique is not much used today. It was very popular, however, with the European settlers at the beginning of the 19th century, so the Micmac craftsmen began to decorate more and more of their birch bark baskets with quills. The quilling was done simply for decorative purposes; impressive both in colour and design it represented the excellent quality of craftsmanship prevalent at the time. Since today there are some Micmac doing research into basket techniques as well as studying the traditional application of porcupine quills, there may yet be a renaissance of this ancient art. In the quill boxes being made today chemical dyes have replaced natural dyes, and most of the traditional geometric designs and stylized flower motifs have been replaced by floral patterns.





*Micmac quillwork box*

Sweet hay or sweet grass was another popular material for making baskets. It was gathered in the early summer, and although a few baskets were made entirely of sweet grass, it was more usually used as a decorative edging. Other grasses, reeds and bulrushes were also used by the Micmac before the arrival of the Europeans.

The newest form of basket work is commonly known as wood splint basketry. Its origin is believed to be European, although it is not known for certain. Splints are made from ash and maple trees. They are usually left in the natural state, but may be dyed. The weaving is generally done in a straight in-and-out pattern, but the earliest baskets in the 1800s were more intricate. Some

resembled flowers, others the prickly look of the porcupine; still others were done in a star effect. Today's splint baskets come in many shapes. They include decorative ones, such as the cup and saucer, and more useful types such as button, apple, and potato baskets.

The aboriginal customs of the Micmac Indians began to disappear when Europeans entered the area. Many members of the tribe became farmers and eventually intermarried with French colonists. They became faithful allies of the French, continuing this association throughout the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries. The descendants of the Micmac (who live on reserves) numbered 8,092 as of December 31, 1975. They occupy several small reserves in the Maritime Provinces, in Québec, Prince Edward Island and in Newfoundland. In Conne River, Newfoundland, ninety percent of the total population is Micmac. Other Micmac families are found at Glenwood (which is near Gander), around Gander Bay, and in the western part of the island.

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## Northwest Coast Indians: TOTEM POLES



*Mortuary pole with grave box*

Totem poles were carved and erected to impress all who saw them with the wealth, status and ancestry of their Northwest Coast Indian owners. At its best this monumental style of wood carving on a red cedar tree trunk is unsurpassed in scale by any other tribal art in the world.

Totem poles ranged from 3.05m to 21.34m high and presented from two to five or more figures. Some were chosen from the half dozen or so clan crests that the head of the family or clan would have the right to use, a privilege somewhat similar to European heraldry. Each figure on the pole represented elements of a family or clan story. The owners of the Tsimshian entry pole "Hole-in-the-Sky" still standing at Kitwancool give several versions of the relationship between the bear, wolf and the humans appearing together on the pole.

The high relief carving on the face of the poles portrayed the West Coast Indian interpretation of clan animals, humans (often the pole's owner) and supernatural spirits. Everything depicted had a face and certain features were emphasized with paint; black for the eye pupils and eyebrows, and red for the nostrils and the lips. Green, brown, yellow and white were occasionally used for the secondary features. Free standing poles were left in the round in most areas, though the Haida hollowed out the back of their poles to make them lighter and more manageable as they were so big. Poles varied in height according to the rank of the chief. The tallest pole in the village would belong to the chief that the others regarded as holding the highest rank. A powerful Nass River chief forced a rival to shorten his pole twice after it was erected.

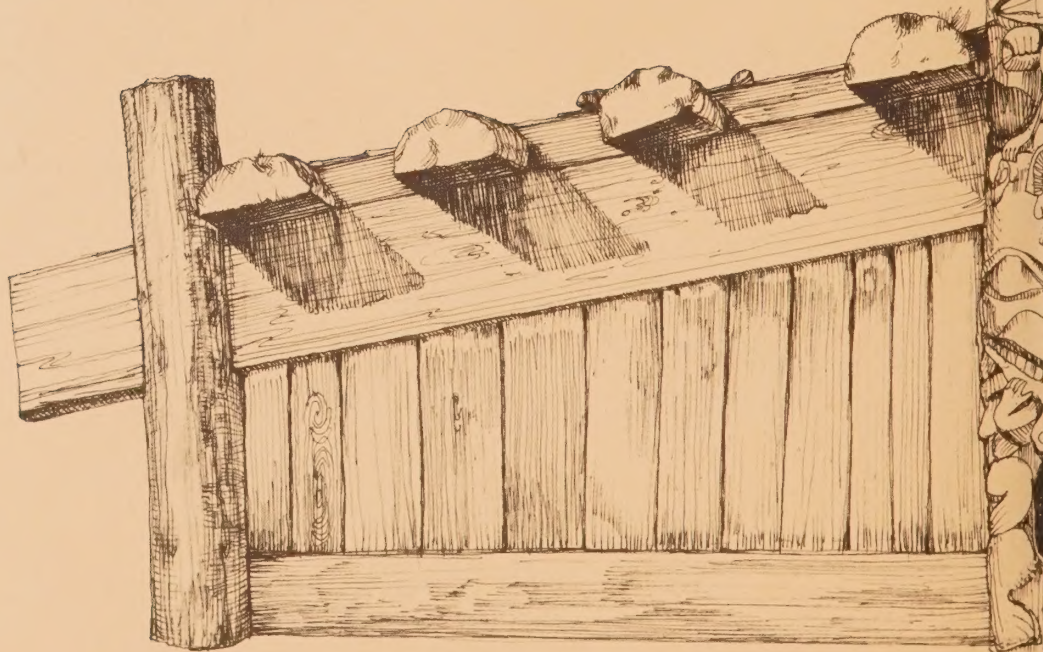
The poles never depicted pagan gods or demons as the first Europeans thought, and they certainly never were worshipped. However, poles did inspire awe and veneration through their meaning and association with the clan and the territory.

There were numerous kinds of totem poles. A memorial pole was erected by a chief's successor. The heir could not assume the title and rights until the memorial pole was completed and validated by a potlatch ceremony. A mortuary pole was set up to receive the remains of the former chief. The grave box was placed in a niche in the



back of the pole, or mounted on the front or top. A third type of pole was the house portal pole common among the Haida. The entrance to the house was through the mouth of the figure at the base of the pole. Structural parts of the house, such as the exterior corner posts, or the pair of rear interior support poles for the roof beams, could be carved with clan crests. In the south, the Kwakiutl liked to add carved and outstretched pieces such as the wings and beaks on the thunderbird or the arms on a human figure to their poles.

A feast or potlatch always accompanied a pole raising. When enough food and presents had been amassed, invitations were sent out to all the leading families in the neighbouring tribes. The pole was raised by ropes and props in the presence of hundreds and sometimes thousands of people. All the participants were paid for their help and all the guests received gifts as they were witnesses to the event. At this time the carvers of the pole, men who specialized in wood carving and their apprentices (usually uncle-nephew kin), were paid for their labour.



Plank house

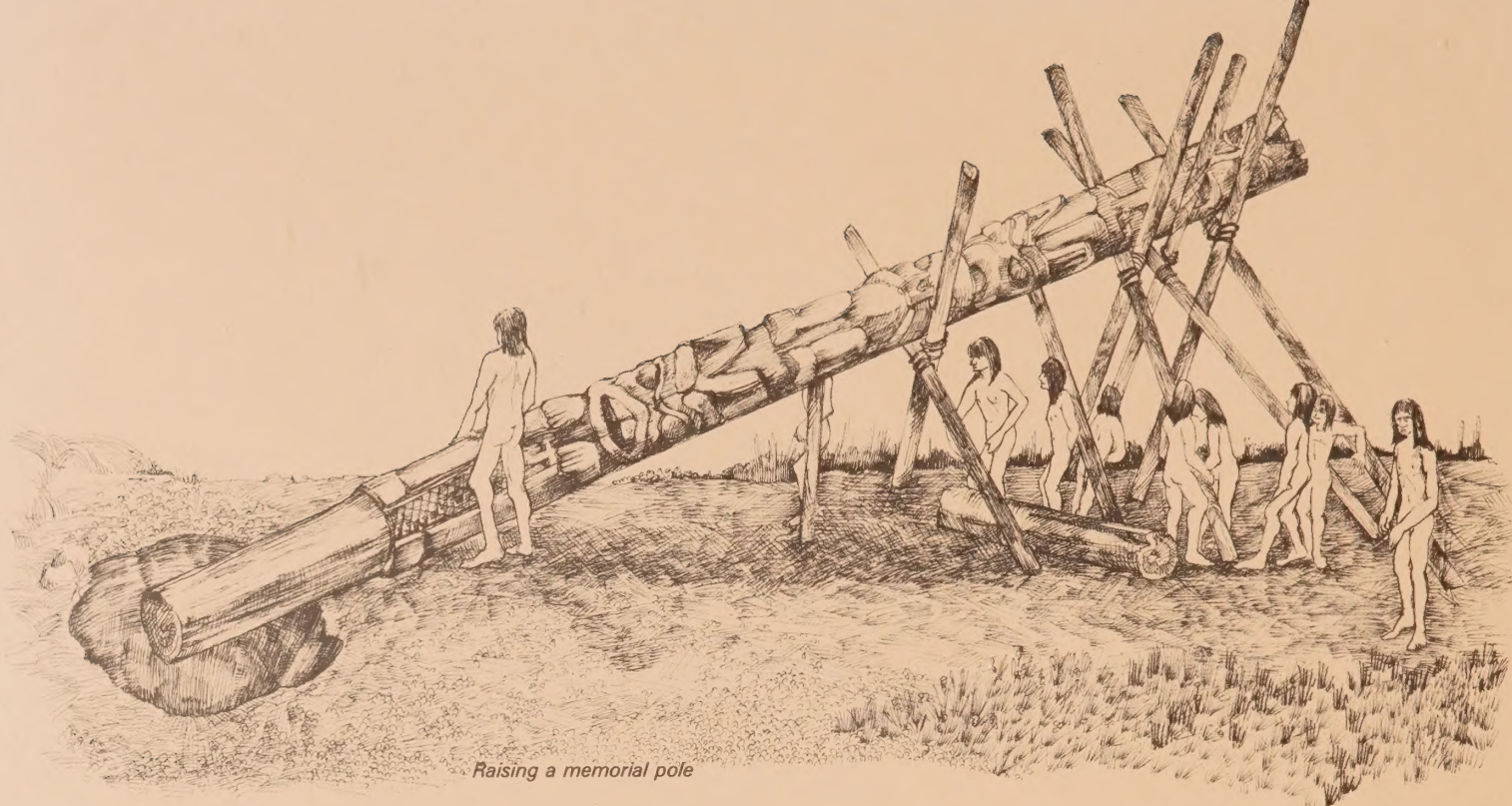


A detailed black and white line drawing of a wooden structure, likely a fence or gate. The structure is composed of several vertical wooden planks, a horizontal beam, and a diagonal brace. The planks are arranged in a way that suggests a fence or a gate. The diagonal brace is supported by a thick vertical post on the right side. On the left side, there is a decorative, carved post. The drawing uses cross-hatching for shading, particularly on the diagonal brace and the vertical post on the right. The overall style is that of a technical or architectural drawing.



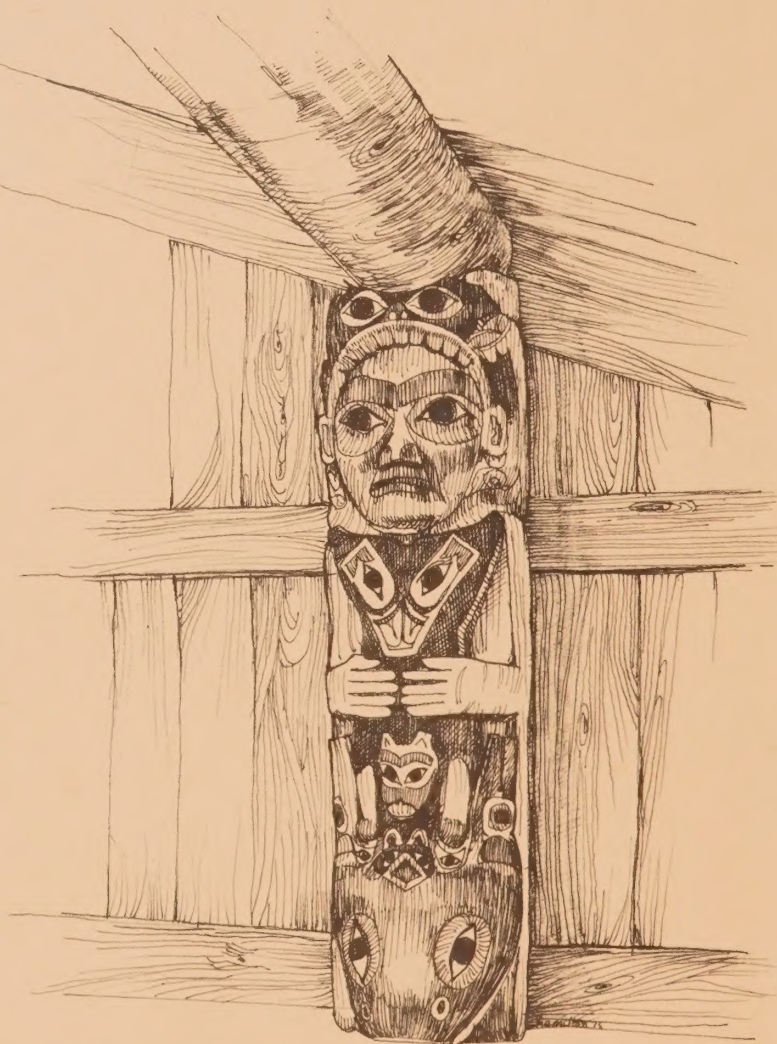
*Frontal pole*





Raising a memorial pole

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Interior house post

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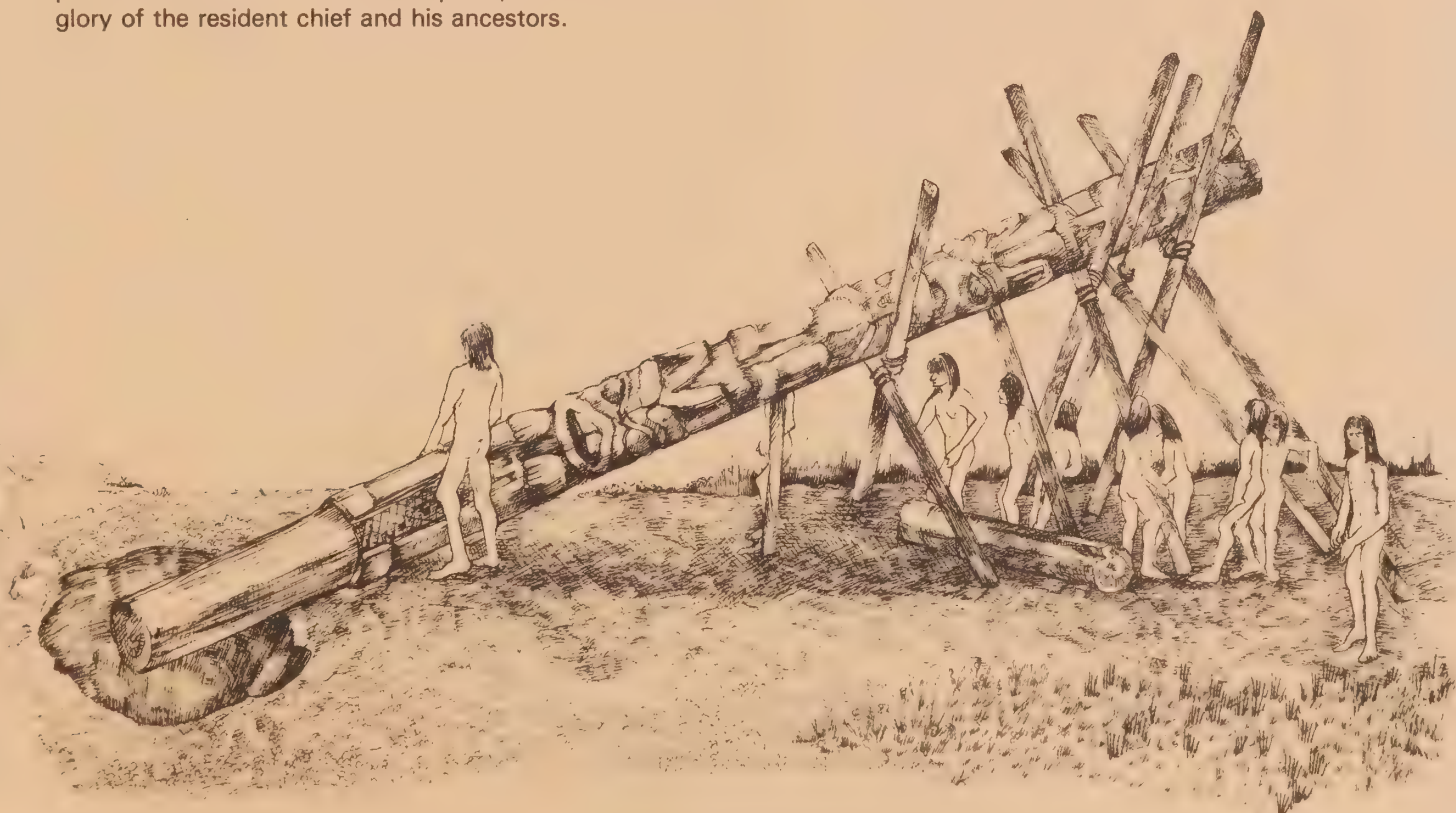


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## Northwest Coast Indians: PLANK HOUSE

The Northwest Coast Indians of British Columbia, Southeast Alaska and Northern Washington state built for their chiefs and nobles, huge plank-covered houses, supported by massive and often elaborately carved timbers. The northern houses were almost square, 15.24m to 18.29m long with vertical planking fitted into slots in the supporting sills. Carved and painted decoration was common. The southern houses were shed-like structures up to 18.29m wide and about 152.40m long with minimal decoration. The planks were tied in place horizontally and each family owned a number of planks. These were communal houses in which each household had a house chief and the inhabitants were related in either male or female line or both. The houses, with their carved totem poles outside and interior carved posts, were built to the glory of the resident chief and his ancestors.

Large well organized work parties were required to build a house and workers were usually hired from a group different to that of the house chief. With simple technology the Indians were able to accomplish feats of major engineering. They used the principle of leverage to hoist the huge supporting timbers into place. To position a roof beam they levered it up a sloping log. To erect a house post or totem pole, the top of the pole was raised by levers and propped into place by lashed cross supports until the end of the pole slid into the hole in the ground that was planked on one side to ease the base into place.



*Raising a memorial pole*





The remarkable red cedar tree made such construction possible within the limitations imposed by lack of metal working tools in precontact times. The planks were split off from the living trees with wood and antler wedges pounded by stone hammers. It was possible to pry off a 12.19m plank, 10.16cm thick with scarcely a knot in it. If a village moved its location, the planks were removed from the framework and taken along.

In the south, the Nootka of Vancouver Island might have had house frames standing at three locations - a winter site in a sheltered bay location, an open seacoast site for fishing and sea mammal hunting, and a third inland site by a salmon stream. This was possible since the Nootka house walls were structurally separate from the framework. Heavy poles and large stones were laid on the roof to protect it from the high winds. These stones still mark house site locations for archaeologists when digging. The huge logs of the framework lasted many years, although the planks were replaced from time to time as they split and warped.



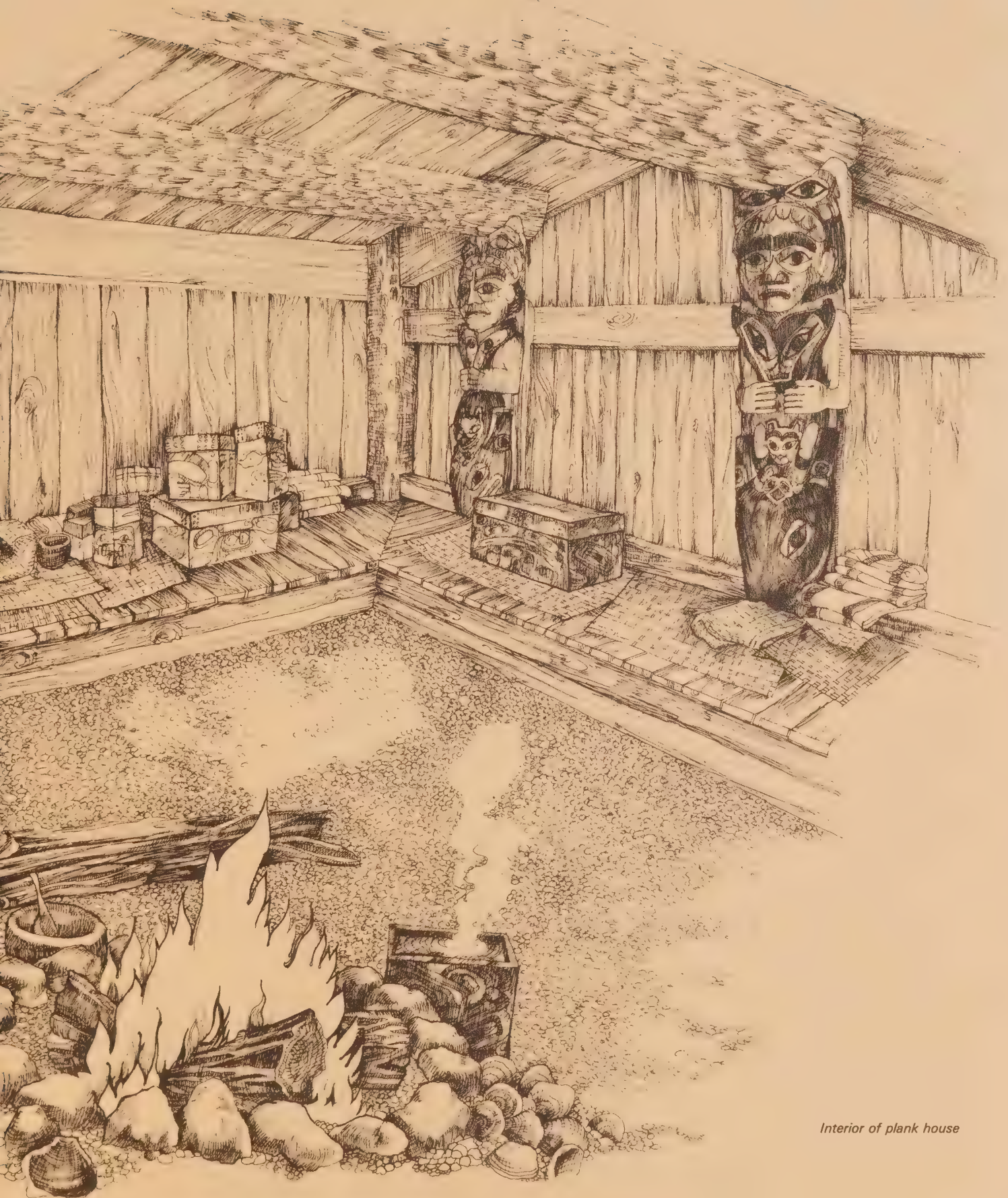
*Final adzing of totem pole*

The northern houses were more permanent structures for the planks were slotted into place. A vital symbolic feature of the house was a smoke hole with a movable cover over the central fire area. The people believed that the smoke rose through the hole up to the celestial houses of the supernatural ones above and that small sacrifices of food would be carried up to the supernatural ones in the smoke. Painted screens were put up in front of the houses for special ceremonies and some houses had crest motifs and supernatural creatures painted directly onto the house.

The owner of the house was the house chief and he organized and supervised the activities of the house members. Among the Haida, the house chief slept in the back corner of the house, possibly in a roofed-over area, with the next ranking chiefs at the front and the commoners along the sides. There was also a village chief recognized by the other chiefs and his house was usually the only one in the village that had an interior house pit with planked sides and places for sitting. In the southern area the social structure was less formal and the house chief might have only a slightly larger apartment inside the house. Privacy was at a minimum in these houses and living areas were often separated by personal possessions such as wooden chests and boxes. The walls were hung with fishing and hunting gear and cradles were hung like hammocks.

The pride of the Haida house owners is shown by the names of their houses - "House Upon Which Clouds Make a Noise", "House People Are Ashamed To Look At As It Is So Overpoweringly Great" and "House Chiefs Peep At From A Distance". The biggest and most important houses stood facing the sea, some with entrances through the mouth of a figure on the frontal totem pole. We know this from early drawings and photographs since, except for reconstructions by museums, these houses are now gone.





*Interior of plank house*



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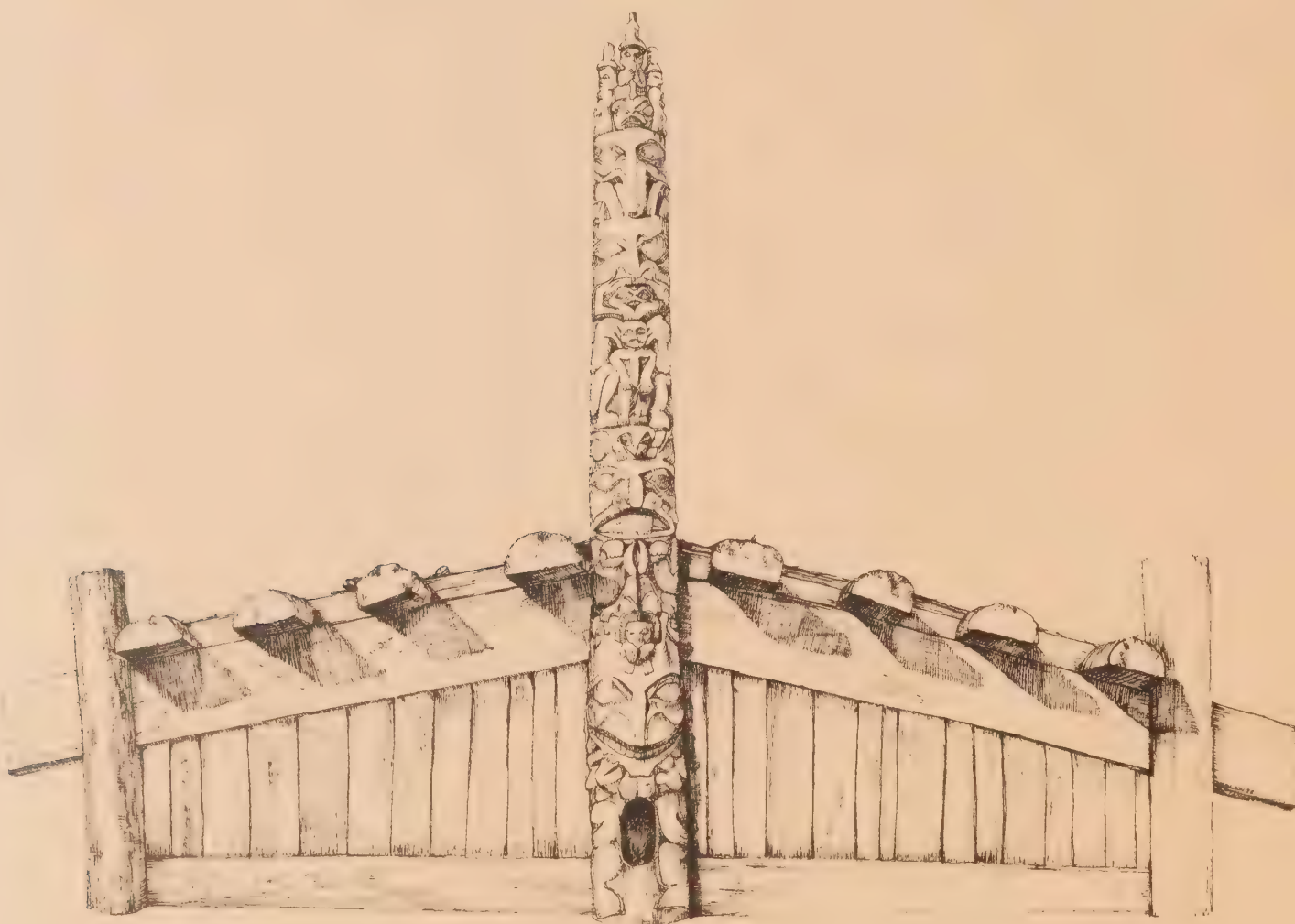
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*Exterior of plank house with frontal pole*

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# NORTHWEST COAST INDIANS

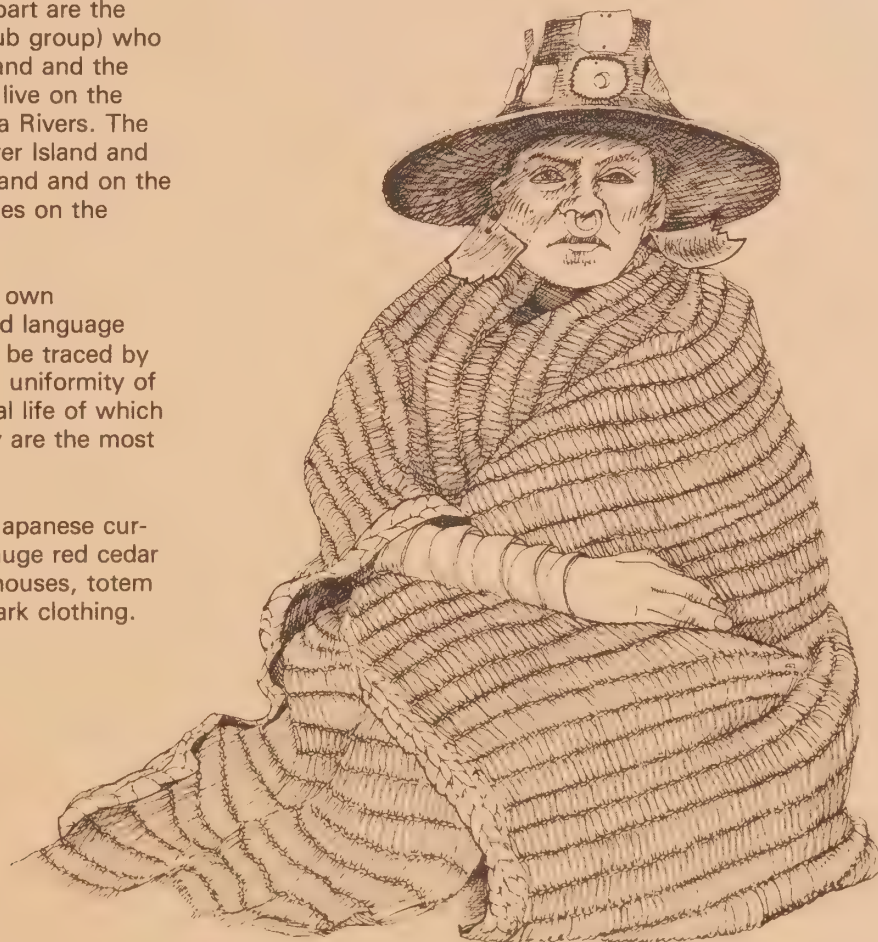
The Northwest Coast is one of the richest natural environments in the world. The Indians who lived there in prehistoric times were hunters, fishermen and gatherers and are said to have reached the highest development of any culture without the benefits of agriculture and animal domestication. The home of these peoples was the narrow strip of land between the coastal mountains and the Pacific Ocean from Southeast Alaska to Northern Oregon and encompassed all the coast and islands of British Columbia.

The tribes who live on the Northwest Coast are often described in terms of northern and southern groups. In the northern part are the Tlingit of Alaska, the Tsimshian of the Nass and Skeena Rivers, and the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands. In the southern part are the Kwakiutl (of which the Bella Bella are a sub group) who live on the mainland, north Vancouver Island and the small islands in between. The Bella Coola live on the mainland around the Dean and Bella Coola Rivers. The Nootka live on the west coast of Vancouver Island and the Salish on the southern parts of the Island and on the mainland. There were numerous small tribes on the coast of Washington state.

Each of the West Coast tribes spoke their own language, though common roots to the old language stocks of Athapaskan and Wakashan can be traced by linguists. The diverse languages overlaid a uniformity of artistic excellence and elaborate ceremonial life of which the totem pole and the potlatch ceremony are the most famous examples.

The natural environment warmed by the Japanese current provides lush forests containing the huge red cedar trees which the Indians transformed into houses, totem poles, canoes, storage boxes and cedar bark clothing.

The abundance of fish, sea mammals, waterfowl, and shellfish, combined with the Indian techniques for smoking and storing these foods for the winter months, contributed to the comfortable living on the coast. The most important fish was the salmon, the Northwest Coast culture being found only where the salmon can be caught in large quantities. Another traditionally important fish was the oolachin of which the oil was a major trade item, exchanged for dried seaweed and dried berries. Cod, herring, and halibut were much sought after food items. Whaling was a mostly ritual activity restricted to the Nootka tribe. Fur bearing sea mammals were hunted for their pelts; the herds of sea otter attracted the first European trade in the late eighteenth century.



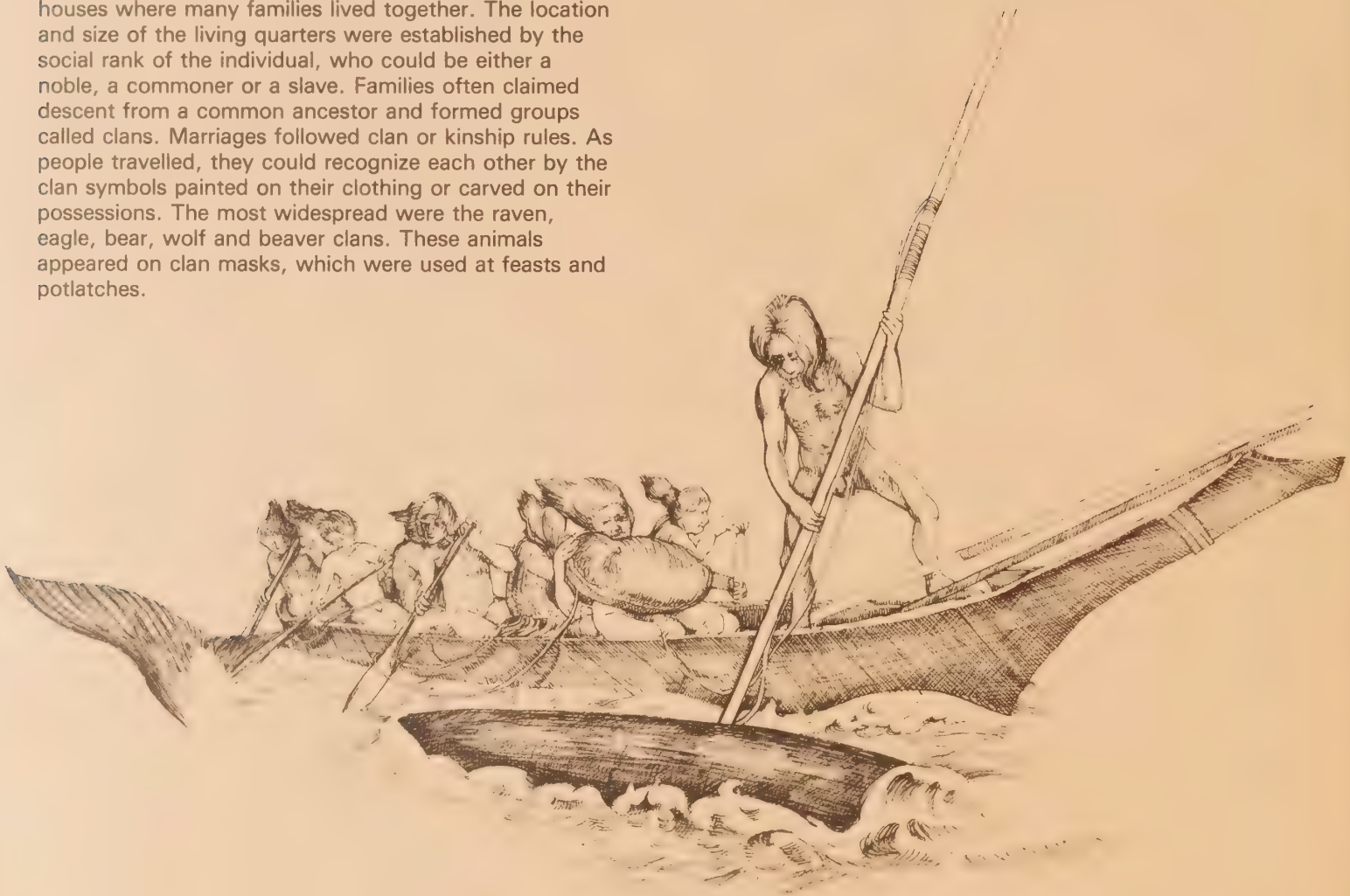
*High ranking Haida woman wearing  
bark clothing, shells and silver jewelry*





The land provided food to a lesser extent. Elk, deer, moose, caribou, beaver, black bear and grizzly bear could be hunted. Numerous birds were prized for their feathers and bones as well as their flesh. The marten, mink, and weasel were valued for their skins. In times of scarcity, shellfish, including sea urchins and clams from the beaches, and fruits and edible roots from the land could be gathered to tide the people over. Mounds of discarded shells mark permanent winter village sites that date back at least 5,000 years.

The permanent winter villages consisted of large plank houses where many families lived together. The location and size of the living quarters were established by the social rank of the individual, who could be either a noble, a commoner or a slave. Families often claimed descent from a common ancestor and formed groups called clans. Marriages followed clan or kinship rules. As people travelled, they could recognize each other by the clan symbols painted on their clothing or carved on their possessions. The most widespread were the raven, eagle, bear, wolf and beaver clans. These animals appeared on clan masks, which were used at feasts and potlatches.



*Whale hunt*





*Plank house with frontal pole*

The supernatural world of the spirits played a part in the life of each person. Spirit power was sought by everyone, usually by fasting and enduring ordeals in order to experience visions that would help them gain wealth and fame. The men and women who established very special relationships with the spirit world were called shaman. The main function of the shaman was to cure the sick, though they were consulted about other things, such as war strategy, as well. It was believed that animal spirits lived in villages similar to those of man and tribute was paid to those supernatural beings which controlled the food supply, particularly the salmon. It was believed that animals allowed themselves to be caught for the benefit of man and that if man in turn thanked the slain animal for giving up its life, the debt was cleared.

The population and the traditional cultures declined in the nineteenth century as the white man's diseases — measles, cholera and small pox — wiped out entire villages. The sea trade waned with the decrease in the supply of sea otter pelts about the 1820s. Now Hudson's Bay posts offered the trade items on which the people depended. Potlatching reached a peak of excess in the nineteenth century as manufactured goods replaced the handmade native objects as gift items. Missionaries began in earnest to eradicate the "heathen cultures"; as a result of their influence on the government, the potlatch was banned in 1884. However the law was repealed in 1951. Potlatches are enjoying a revival today, primarily in conjunction with the raising of memorial poles by the Haida, Tsimshian and Kwakiutl.

The West Coast Indians are currently successful in many areas of the economy of British Columbia. Fishing is still a vital element in Indian culture; many Indians own commercial fishing boats and they can take their catch to the Indian-owned fish co-operatives at Port Simpson and Bella Bella. The Osoyoos Band Council in south central British Columbia in 1968 founded the first native-owned vineyard, Inkameep Vineyards Limited, now the third largest vineyard in British Columbia. They are experimenting with new grapes, and harvest 250 tons annually. The Burns Lake and Port Nelson Bands have equity in large local sawmills. The traditional arts are flourishing, with Indians operating commercial outlets in Hazelton ('Ksan carving school), Victoria and Vancouver, for their high quality wood sculptures, jewellery and art prints.

Census statistics indicate that there were 54,318 registered Indians in British Columbia in December 1977 or about one-sixth of the Indians living in Canada. This figure does not include non-status Indians who are Indians of mixed blood or Indian women who have married non-Indians. At the time of European contact in the later part of the eighteenth century the Indian population in British Columbia is estimated to have been about 80,000.



*Interior of plank house*



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*Modern grape harvesting*

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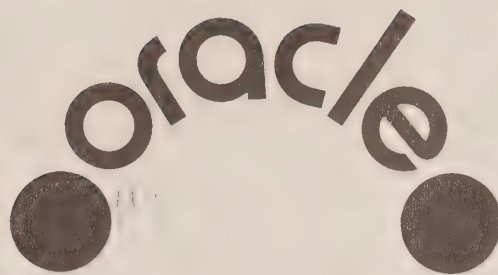
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# MONTAGNAIS and NASKAPI

The Montagnais and Naskapi Indians live in a vast area on the Labrador peninsula in eastern Canada. Their dialects are mutually intelligible; their customs so similar that it is often difficult to distinguish one tribe from the other. They are both Algonkian speakers; and both are nomadic peoples who once lived exclusively by hunting and fishing. In the past, clubs, spears, and bows and arrows were used to hunt as well as in warfare against neighbouring peoples.

Many of the differences between the Montagnais and the Naskapi are related to their environment. The Montagnais territory is a well-watered woodland with plenty of moose, whereas much of the Naskapi territory is open plateau covered with grasses and lichens, the natural feeding ground for herds of barren-ground caribou.

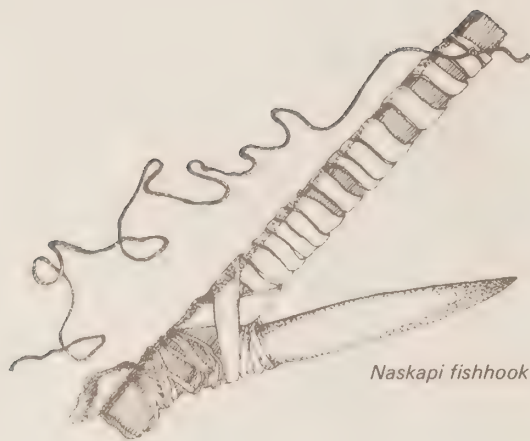
Before the mid-nineteenth century, the Montagnais roamed a huge square bounded on one side by the North Shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence between the St. Maurice River and Sept-Îles, and on the other by the height of land which separates the waters flowing into the St. Lawrence from those flowing into James Bay. They lived in conical wigwams covered with birch bark. In the winter they hunted moose; in the spring they moved down the rivers to spear salmon and eel and to harpoon seals.

The Naskapi lived in an even larger area; they roamed the entire Labrador peninsula east of a line from Sept-Îles to Lake Nichikun, and of a second from Lake Nichikun to Ungava Bay. . . with the exception of a narrow belt along the coast from Ungava Bay to the Strait of Belle Isle, which was controlled by the Eskimo, their traditional enemies. The Naskapi lived in wigwams covered with caribou skins. They hunted caribou from mid-summer to early spring, when some Naskapi moved to the coast and others fished in the many inland lakes and rivers; they also hunted hare, porcupine and other small game.



*Naskapi Indian with coat, mittens and pouch*





*Naskapi fishhook*

Neither the Montagnais nor the Naskapi had true tribal organization. They lived in a number of small bands whose members were related to each other by marriage. They possessed separate hunting territories, but had no strong leaders. Even though certain people were named as Chiefs, they had little or no authority, and in times of war a general council of warriors directed battle plans.

Both groups traced descent on each side of the family. A prospective groom lived with his future in-laws and served them for a year before taking his wife back to live with his family. The bride was usually married without any ceremony, and without much consideration for her wishes.

The Montagnais and Naskapi were very religious. They believed in many supernatural beings, including a great sky god to whom they occasionally offered smoke from their pipes. They also believed that animals have souls and they tried not to offend the animals, observing

various taboos, because they depended on them for their food supply. As among other Algonkian groups of eastern North America, visions and dreams played a significant role. Boys fasted so that they would receive dreams and visions that were believed to bring them luck. They trusted that the guardian spirits acquired in dreams and the power of their shamans would protect them from evil spirits and shield them from the sorcery of their fellow men.

The Montagnais and Naskapi were some of the first Canadian Indians to come into close contact with Europeans, although in certain regions they have remained less influenced by them than have other native peoples. This was partly due to the rugged and inhospitable nature of their land, which isolated them. When Europeans entered the area however, they reduced game stocks through the indiscriminate use of firearms so that the natural balance was changed and traditional boundaries altered. For a while the Indians were successful in the fur trade, but this success was weakened when white men encroached on their best trapping and hunting grounds.

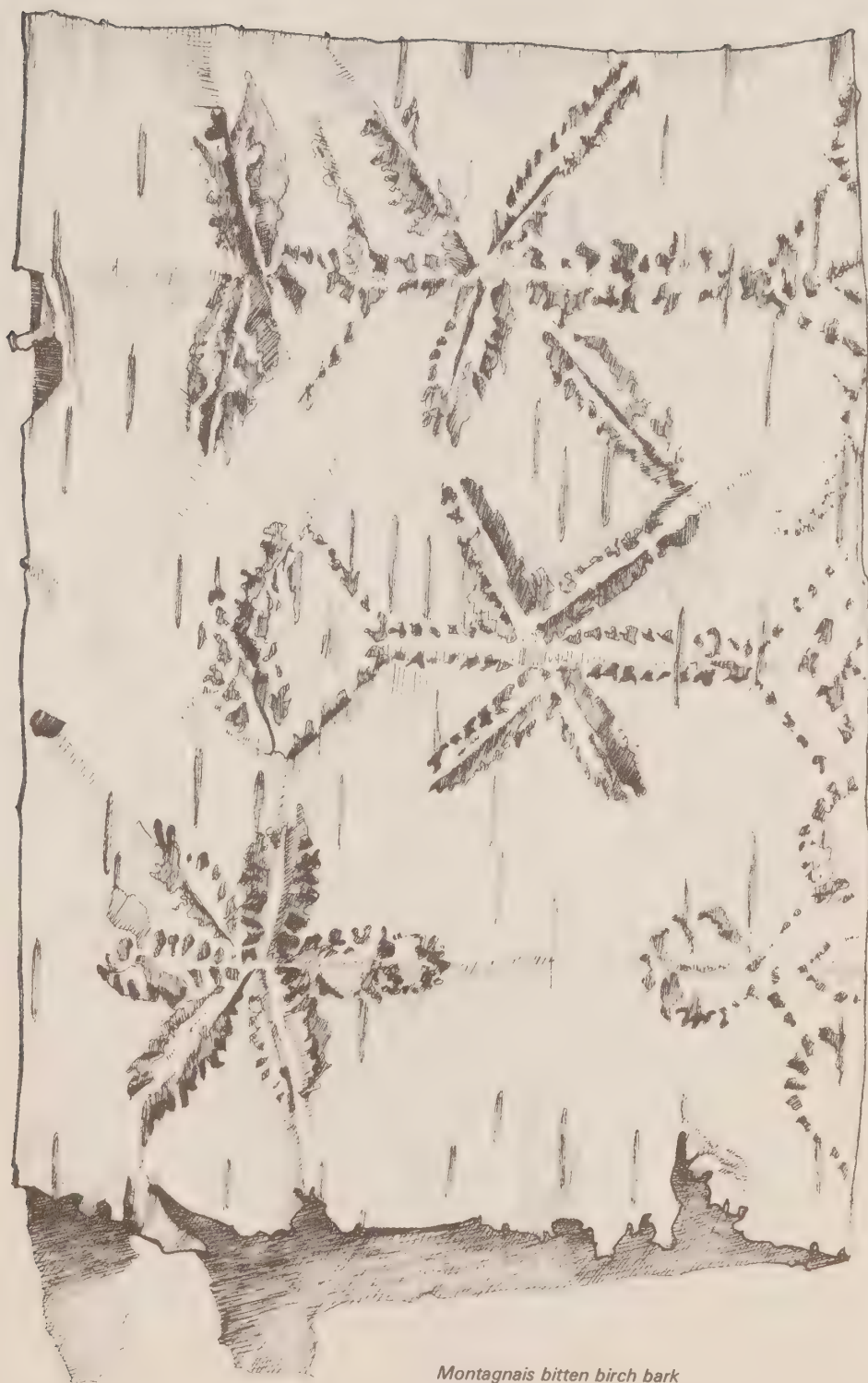
Many natives of the interior were urged by missionaries to settle on the coast, but they contracted various lung afflictions, such as tuberculosis, which were aggravated by the damp sea air. Measles and other diseases introduced by Europeans helped to reduce their population, too, for the Indians had no immunity to these diseases.

The combined population of the two groups now numbers around 3,000. Many of the remaining Montagnais and Naskapi still live by hunting and trapping — exchanging pelts at trading posts for manufactured items.



*Birch bark and skin wigwams*





*Montagnais bitten birch bark*



*Montagnais fishing spear*



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*Painted skin, Naskapi*

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# THE BLACKFOOT



*Tipi*

NMC 58569

The Blackfoot were the strongest and most aggressive Indians on the Canadian Plains during the middle of the eighteenth century. In the early 1700s they had occupied the Saskatchewan Valley, about 643.74 km east of the Rocky Mountains. Before 1750 the Blackfoot had acquired horses and guns and had expanded their territory; at the height of their power it extended from the Rocky Mountains into what is now Saskatchewan, and from the northern Saskatchewan River almost to the upper Missouri River in the present-day United States.

The term "Blackfoot" refers to three tribes which formed a loose confederacy or "nation": the Siksika or Blackfoot proper, the Pikuni or Peigan, and the Kainah or Blood. Each tribe was independent, but members of all three spoke a common language of the Algonkian language family. They were further united by similar customs, a tradition of common origin, and by frequent intermarriage between members of the different tribes. They did not wage war on each other; in fact they helped one another in battles against common enemies.





*Buffalo hunting on horseback, Diamond Jenness*

NMC 81456

The name, "Blackfoot", is a translation of what they called themselves, *Siksikauwa*, which may refer to the moccasins they wore which were either painted black or darkened by Prairie fires.

The Blackfoot economy was based primarily on hunting. The most important game animals were bison, or buffalo, which roamed in vast herds over the plains of North America. Buffalo provided the Blackfoot Indians with much of what was needed in everyday life. The meat was sun-dried, or pounded fine and mixed with fat and dried berries to form pemmican. Both the sun-dried (or jerked) variety and the pounded mixture could be kept for months. The skins of the buffalo were used as cloaks and bed coverings. Scraped skins were made into shields and meat bags, and sinews were used for lines and ropes. Bones were fashioned into knives and arrowheads and awls which were used for sewing. Even the stomach of the animal was cleaned out and used as a container and the horns were carved into cups.

The Blackfoot Indians, who lived in tipis throughout the year, camped in small groups during the summer and fall. This was the time of the most intense hunting activity, as well as a time for ceremonies and other social activities. The great summer buffalo hunt involved the co-operation of many people for a whole herd might be driven down a funnel-shaped runway over a cliff. Once the Blackfoot obtained breechloader guns, around 1870, it was easy for a group of mounted hunters to encircle a herd, get it moving and then shoot the animals as they dashed for freedom.

During the winter the Blackfoot broke up into many small bands which wintered separately in sheltered river valleys. In late October or early November the band chief chose a campsite in a broad river valley, protected from winds and snow by the high, natural walls of the valley itself. The valley floor provided grass for the horses. They relied on dried meat for food, hunting buffalo, deer and other animals when they could. When spring came they gathered turnips, bitterroot, camas root and other plants. Because the buffalo bulls did not reach their prime until June, only smaller animals were hunted in the spring.

Each band had a chief. When all the bands of the tribe camped together, a head chief was selected. The head chief was chief in peace time only, passing his authority to a war chief in times of trouble or danger. The band chiefs formed a tribal council. Several military societies were also found in each of the Blackfoot tribes and the leaders of these societies sat on the tribal council. Members of the military societies policed the camps, organized buffalo hunts, and guarded the tribe when it was on the march. There were also dancing societies with social and religious functions.

Warfare was almost a way of life for the Blackfoot Indians. Before the white settlers arrived they fought the Cree and the Assiniboiné. Whenever a party was getting ready for an expedition a feast was held, religious sacrifices were offered, and vows were made that were later fulfilled at the annual Sun Dance. Warfare among Plains Indians increased as horses were obtained, usually

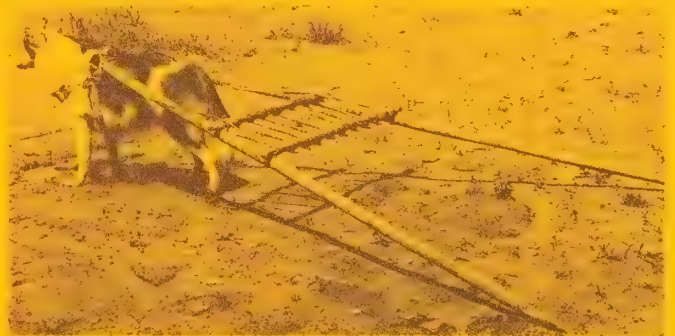




Headdress

through raids on other Indian groups. Heroic deeds on these mounted raids brought great prestige to the men and those who achieved prestige through warfare were allowed to wear feathers in a head-dress. A train of plumes hanging to the feet was the highest honour that a man could win.

In order to become successful horsemen, hunters and warriors, Blackfoot boys were urged to go on vision quests. They spent days in isolation, without food, in order to obtain, through a vision, a guardian spirit which would help them in life. The spirit would instruct the young Indian in battle tactics and in the use of medicines. Soon after a young man returned home, he made certain articles given him in his dream according to the instructions he had received from the spirit. These made up the contents of his personal medicine bundle. Medicine bundles included objects such as feathers wrapped in skin or cloth, stone pipes, skins of animals and birds, or roots and rocks. Each object represented a blessing bestowed upon a Blackfoot through a vision. The Blackfoot were a religious people, and believed that the blessing could be retained for mankind by handing down the objects in the bundles from generation to generation. Unless a Blackfoot relinquished these sacred objects, which were regarded as symbols of power, he retained the power until death. And if a medicine bundle was lost or captured by the enemy, the power was not permanently lost, for the one who had possessed the power could remake the bundle.



Dog with travois

NMC 62763

The introduction of the horse and the gun changed many aspects of Blackfoot culture. They had traditionally travelled on foot, either swimming across rivers or using tub-like boats made of willow twigs and bison hides. They either carried their belongings or transported them on a travois, which was a platform suspended between two poles lashed to the shoulders of a dog. After horses were acquired, the Blackfoot became more mobile and it was easier for them to search out the buffalo. Wealth came to be measured in terms of the number of horses owned. A man with many horses could, for example, have additional wives or he could buy membership in one of the societies or, he could buy sacred objects or sacred songs.



The Blackfoot believed in the existence of a Great Spirit, who was the creator of all things. The power of the Great Spirit was believed to pervade the air, earth and sky and the spirit's residence was believed to be the sun. The most important Blackfoot ceremony was the annual Sun Dance, which was held in mid-summer when the tribe camped together. During the Sun Dance (which was forbidden by law in 1921) a person who had overcome a time of crisis fulfilled the vows he had made to dance the Sun Dance in thanksgiving. The Sun Dance included many rites as does, for example, the celebration of Christmas. Some of the rituals involved the use of sacred buffalo tongues from the great summer buffalo hunt. The climax of the Sun Dance came on the fifth day, when a medicine lodge was built. Its most sacred feature was the great central pole which was loaded with offerings to the Great Spirit. During the ceremonies, young men danced, fasted, and tortured themselves to secure blessings from the supernatural. Some of them might undergo a rite that caused intense physical pain and left permanent scars. This rite involved putting sharp wooden skewers through the muscles of the back or chest. Lines fastened to the skewers were tied to the sacred pole. By straining until his flesh tore away, the warrior finally freed himself. While doing this he sang and danced, showing no evidence of pain.

By 1880 the Blackfoot had come a long way from their stone-age culture. At the height of their power, around 1830, their total population may have exceeded 10,000. But smallpox epidemics between 1836 and 1857 reduced the population. By the early 1880s the buffalo on the Plains had been killed almost to extinction and many Blackfoot died of starvation. Since then, many people of the Blackfoot tribes have become farmers and cattle-herders. Today the members of the three Blackfoot tribes live on three reserves in Alberta and one reserve in Montana, U.S.A. As of December 31st, 1976, their total population registered in Canada was 2,762.

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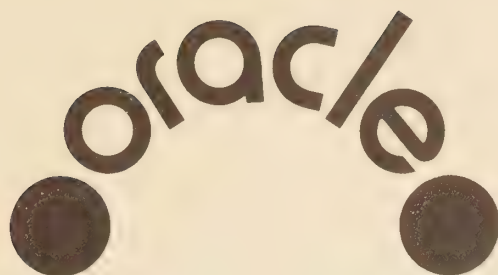
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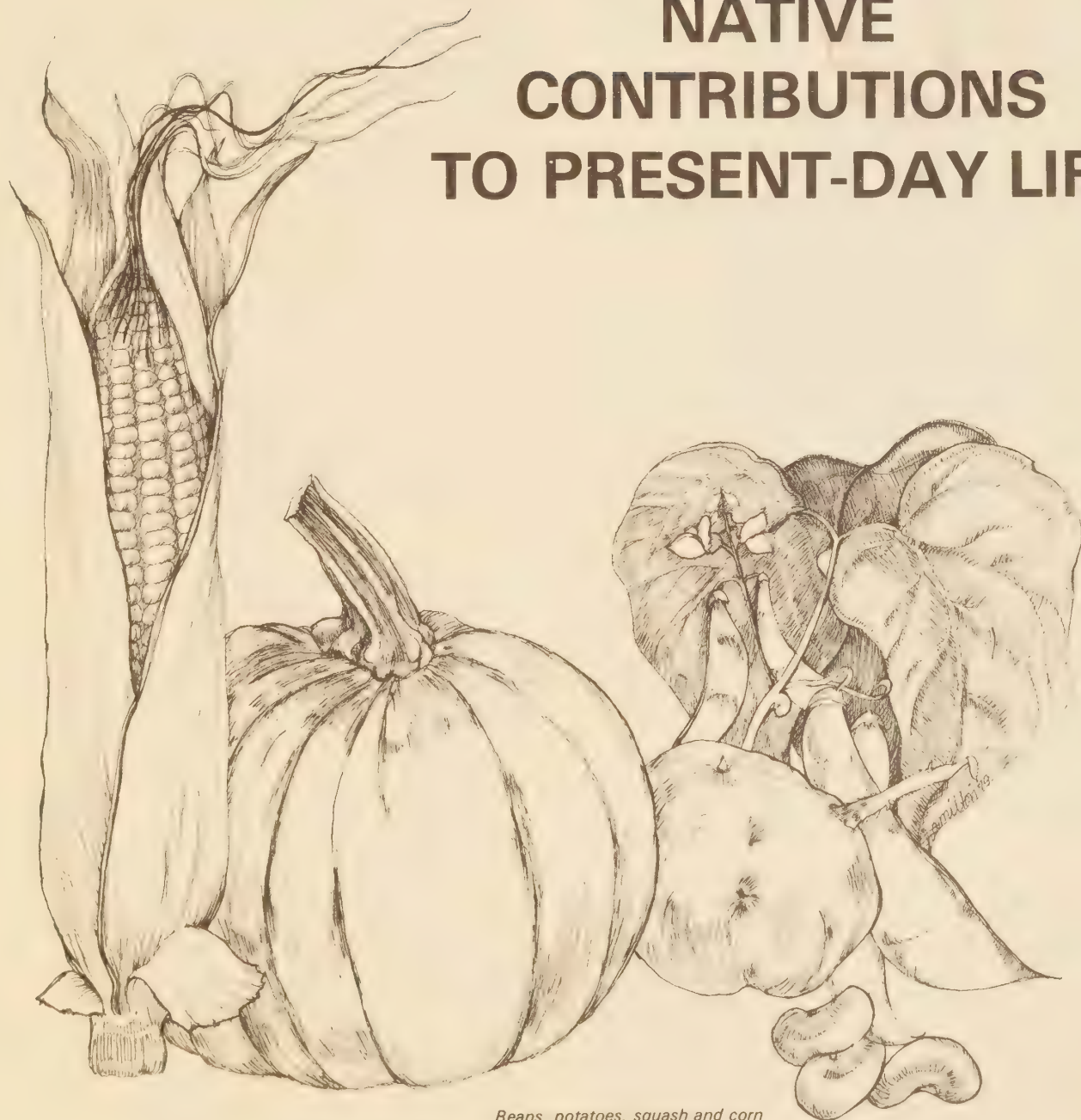


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# NATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRESENT-DAY LIFE



*Beans, potatoes, squash and corn*





The Indians and Eskimo have made a great number of contributions to present-day life. The noted anthropologist, Harold E. Driver, in *Indians of North America*, states that exchanges between Europeans and New World peoples initiated a "most dramatic and far-reaching cross-fertilization of cultures".

One of the most important contributions by American Indians was in the growing of food plants. Indians not only showed the earliest settlers new kinds of plants to grow but they also taught them the associated techniques of planting and cultivating. After the exploration of the Americas by Europeans, over 50 new kinds of edible plants were introduced to the Old World. Today, plants first domesticated by New World Indians furnish almost half the world's total food supply. Two of these, which originated in the New World — corn (maize) and potatoes — are, along with rice and wheat, the most important food staples we have today.

The potato, first domesticated by the Andean Indians of South America, has an interesting history. It was introduced to Ireland by the early 1600's, and within the next 50 years had become the most important food source in that country. The potato was later re-exported, this time from Ireland to North America, where it was called the "Irish" potato. The blight on the Irish potato crop in 1845 resulted in the potato famine, which initiated the immigration of many Irish people to North America.

Other important staple foods originating in the New World include *cassava* or manioc (now a staple in parts of Africa and the source of tapioca), the kidney bean and the lima bean. European settlers also found many other new vegetables and fruits which have since spread all over the world, including the American sweet potato, peanuts, squash, pumpkins, avocados, chili peppers, tomatoes, pineapples, artichokes, cacao (the source of cocoa), chicle (for chewing gum), and various beans. The introduction of many of these foods has played a part in the striking growth in world population since the mid 1600s.

European settlers learned to make many new dishes from the Indians — succotash (made from corn and lima beans), cornbread, hominy, tamales, tortillas and toasted cornflakes are only a few. The settlers also learned how to make maple syrup. The turkey, which has become a popular festive food in North America, and the guinea pig, used today in laboratory experiments, were domesticated by New World Indians. The turkey is believed to have first been domesticated in Mexico, where it was prized as food; the guinea pig comes from the South American Indians.

Cotton was the leading textile fibre in the New World, whereas in Europe it was flax (linen). Today whenever we put on a cotton garment, it is usually made from cotton of American Indian derivation (although cotton had been domesticated in the Old World, especially Egypt). Sisal (agave fibre) once used by Mesoamerican Indians as a clothing material, is still made into rope.

Tobacco was first grown in tropical parts of the Americas, but its use spread to the Indians of most of North and South America. It did not however, reach the Eskimo in pre-European times. The Indians used tobacco in pipes, cigars, cigarettes, and as snuff. The plant was introduced to Europe in 1558, when it was taken to Spain as a medicine. In 1586 Sir Walter Raleigh introduced smoking tobacco to the English court and the



*Tobacco*



custom spread quickly among the English people. By the year 1700 the use of tobacco had encircled the globe. It was re-introduced to America from Siberia at Alaska, where the Eskimo finally discovered nicotine.

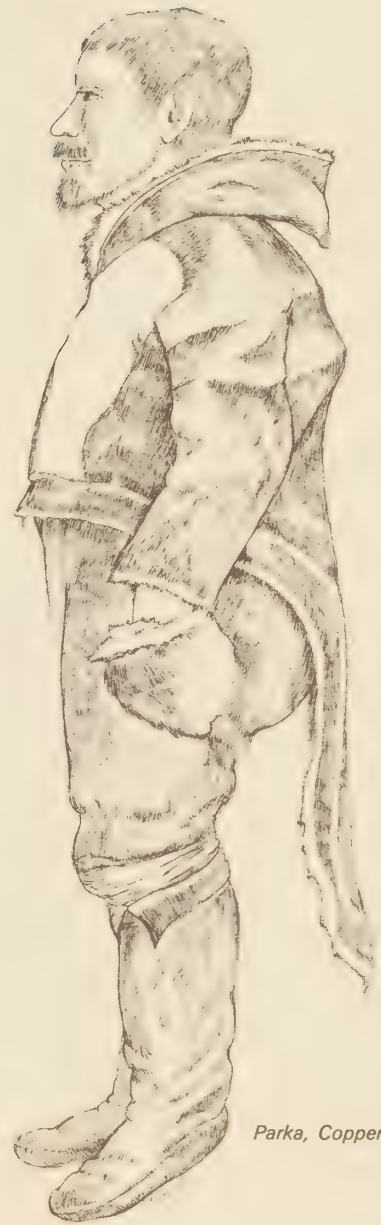
Over 50 drugs used in modern medicine were discovered and used by American Indians. Some of these include cocoa (for cocaine and novacaine), curare (a muscle relaxant used in anaesthetics), inchona bark (the source of quinine, which is used to treat malaria), cascara sagrada (a laxative), datura (a pain reliever), witch hazel (for muscular aches and pains), and ephedra (used in clearing nasal passages and sinuses).

Many Indian and Eskimo inventions were adopted by the immigrants to the New World. Dugout canoes were used by the early traders in western North America and birch bark canoes of Algonkian origin were used by white men in the north. Indeed, the early birch bark canoes were the prototypes for boats made today of canvas or fiberglass. Canvas and fiberglass models of the Eskimo kayak (the narrow hide-covered boat of the far north) are also being made both for functional use and for sport. The Eskimo use of the dogsled was imitated until recently when it began to be replaced by the snowmobile. Toboggans and snowshoes were adopted from northern Athapaskan and Algonkian Indians, and the hammock, invented as a sleeping place by Indians of the tropical forests of South America, has become popular throughout North America.

Many forms of Indian and Eskimo clothing were borrowed by European settlers. Frontiersmen adopted such Indian items of dress as moccasins, leggings and buckskin shirts, finding them well-suited to life in the wilderness. Contemporary house slippers owe their inspiration to the Indian moccasin and the warm yet fashionable parka owes its origin to the Eskimo.

Indians were the first people to become familiar with the properties of rubber. They made enema syringes and tubes of rubber, hollow rubber balls and waterproof fabrics. Columbus actually took rubber samples back to Europe, but it wasn't until about 250 years later that its commercial potential was realized.

Indian methods of survival helped the early explorers and traders, and Indian camping and woodcraft knowledge has been borrowed by such organizations as the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides, which were inspired, in great part, by the lessons of Indian life. Then too, many Eskimo techniques of survival under rigorous Arctic conditions were taught to members of the Armed Forces during and after the Second World War.



*Parka, Copper Eskimo*

Indian languages have given to new North American cultures literally thousands of place names, names for familiar objects as well as many common expressions. Indians and Eskimo have long been popular subjects in sculpture and painting and native Indian and Eskimo arts and crafts are known all over the world. Popular games, such as lacrosse, have been learned from the Indian people and many songs, stories, poems and books have been written about Indians and the Eskimo.





Ojibwa bark canoe

When the contemporary world is faced by exploding population, air pollution, over-crowding, shortages, and the disappearance of the wilderness, many conservationists recall the ways of Indian cultures which lived more in harmony with nature. As Stewart Udall wrote in *The Quiet Crisis*:

It is ironical that today the conservation movement finds itself turning back to ancient Indian land ideas, to the Indian understanding that we are not outside of nature, but of it . . . from this wisdom we can learn how to conserve the best parts of our continent. In recent decades we have slowly come back to some of the truths that the Indians knew from the beginning: that unborn generations have a claim on the land equal to our own; that men need to learn from nature, to keep an ear to the earth, and to replenish their spirits in frequent contacts with animals and wild land. And most important of all, we are recovering a sense of reverence for the land.

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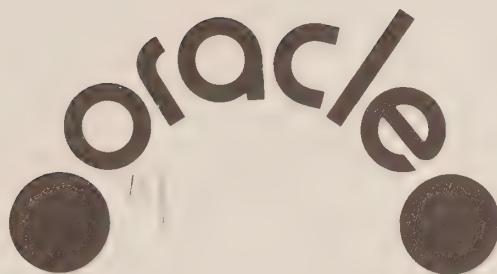
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# THE CREE



*Swampy Cree Pouch*

The Cree are an Algonkian-speaking group of natives living in an extensive area of central Canada, south of Hudson Bay. They expanded their territory further and further west after they obtained horses and firearms from white traders. By the middle of the 18th century, the Cree Indians controlled a large area of the Canadian Prairies. Their homeland, which stretches from Quebec to Alberta in the northern woodland district, and down into the Prairies of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, covers a greater geographical area than that occupied by any of

the other Algonkian-speaking peoples. Cree Indians were closely related, and almost equal in number, to the Ojibwa with whom they shared bordering territory on the north and west. Both tribes occupied an immense area of land. On the north, the Cree land was bounded by the coastline from Eastmain River nearly to Churchill; on the east it was bounded by Lakes Mistassini and Nichikun. The land is densely forested in many parts, and liberally strewn with lakes, streams and areas of muskeg.

The Cree once lived almost entirely by hunting, although they fished when game was scarce. They hunted the woodland caribou, moose, beaver and bear; in the winter they relied heavily on obtaining a plentiful supply of hare, which they caught in snares made from willow bark. But hare, like several of the other northern mammals, go through cycles of increase and decrease. Every ninth winter the hare disappears almost completely and remains scarce for a year or two afterwards. During these difficult times, many natives died from starvation. There were fears of cannibalism which occupies a prominent place in the legends of the tribe. Many of these legends tell about *Windigos* — human beings transformed into man-eating, supernatural giants through the eating of human flesh.



*Birch bark wigwam*

In the spring and autumn, migrating geese and ducks were eagerly sought, while grouse and ptarmigan supplemented the diet of the Cree during the winter. To ensure success in the hunt, the Cree had numerous taboos and hunting rituals which were intended to please the spirits of the animals they sought. Hunters carried medicine bags containing magical objects that were supposed to help them in the chase. And Cree youths spent a period of seclusion when they fasted in order to receive visions from the spirit world. This was supposed to bring them success in life and thus in the hunt. The Cree, as well as the Ojibwa, had a great fear of witchcraft and the Ojibwa and some of the Cree recognized a good spirit as well as a bad spirit.

Like other Algonkian Indians, the Cree lived in small bands made up of related families. They built dome-shaped wigwams like the Ojibwa lodges, or conical dwellings like those of other tribes in the east. These were covered with either birch bark, pine bark or caribou hides. Farther north, where birch trees were small and stunted, they used coverings of pine bark or hide from the caribou.

The Cree Indians made their storage containers of birch bark, for their pottery work had fallen into disuse when the white traders provided ready-made articles; in the James Bay area, they often used soapstone pots for cooking instead of birch bark pots. Woven hare-skin or caribou fur coats and blankets protected the Cree from bitterly cold winters.

When the Europeans came to the New World, many Cree Indians became involved in the fur trade, trapping fur-bearing animals and trading pelts for other supplies. With the introduction of guns and horses by the Hudson's Bay Company, they expanded northward and westward, so that by the middle of the 18th century, they controlled what is now northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan (as far as Churchill River), all of present-day Alberta, the valley of Slave River, and the south-eastern part of the Great Lakes.

Some of the Woodland Cree moved onto the plains to hunt buffalo. These Cree, who became known as Plains Cree, took on many of the characteristics of other Plains tribes. Buffalo formed the basis of their way of life, supplying food, hides for lodge coverings, clothing, and bone for implements such as tools.





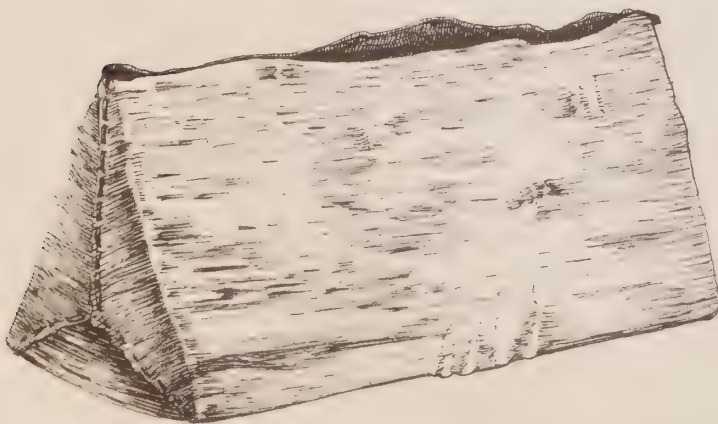
*Dome shaped wigwam*

A small pox epidemic in 1784 checked the expansion of the Plains Cree, and another epidemic in 1838 further reduced their numbers. Other new diseases, especially tuberculosis, also reduced the Woodland Cree, and con-

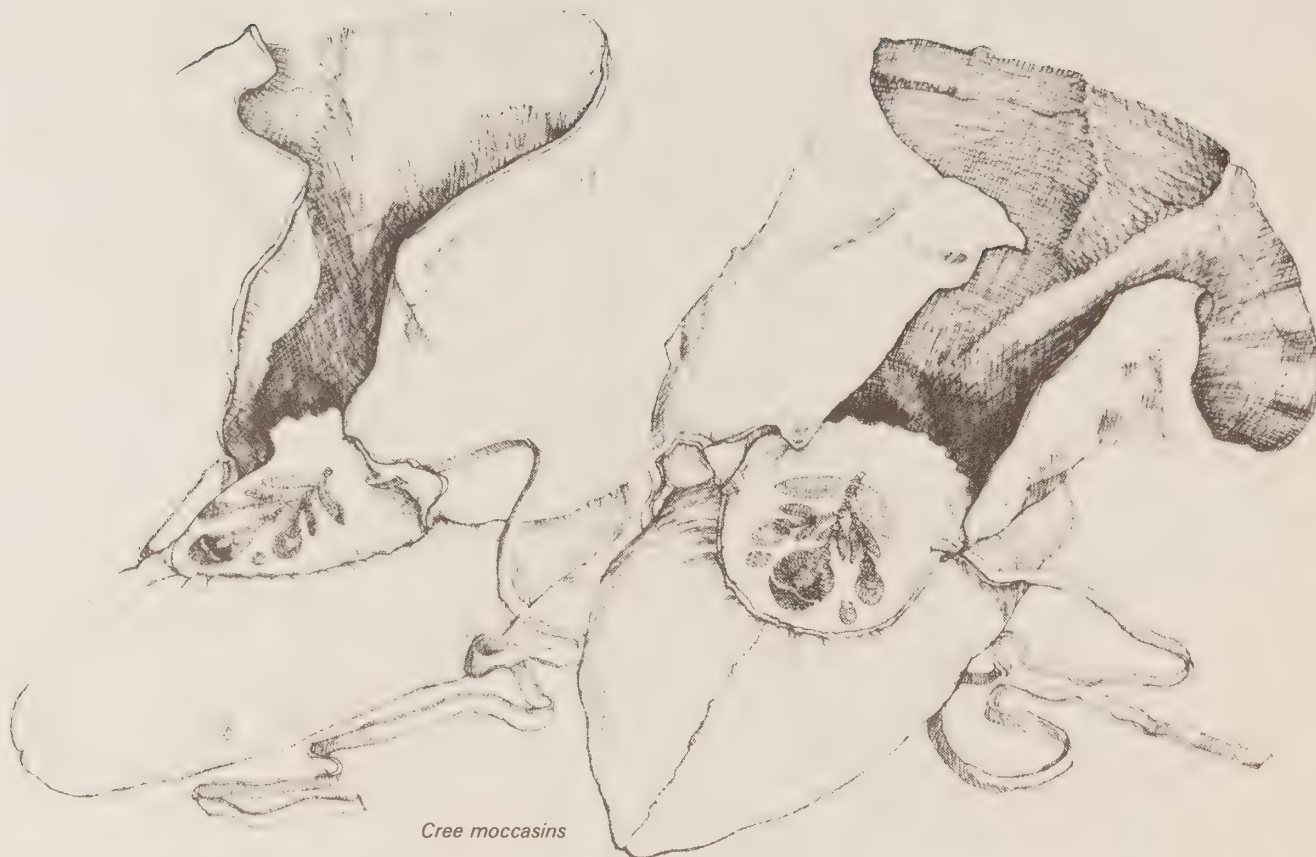
sumption became almost endemic in many districts, as it has among the tribes of the MacKenzie Valley. The Cree also suffered heavily from epidemics of influenza in 1908 and 1909, and again in 1917.

As they were a marginal people who required large tracts of land to ensure a livelihood by hunting and trapping, the Cree Indians were the victims of an almost ceaseless encroachment on their hunting grounds, and a steady decrease in the supply of game. Buffalo herds also declined to a point near extinction, and fur-bearing animals were over-hunted to secure a supply of furs for the Euro-Canadian market.

The Cree, like other tribes, are regaining their self respect, as well as learning to deal with the complexities of contemporary life. As of December 31st, 1975, there were 59,311 Cree Indians living on reserves throughout Canada.



*Cree birch bark and spruce root container*



*Cree moccasins*

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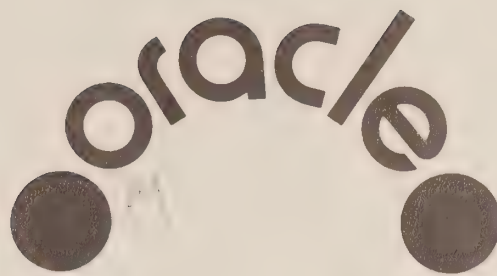
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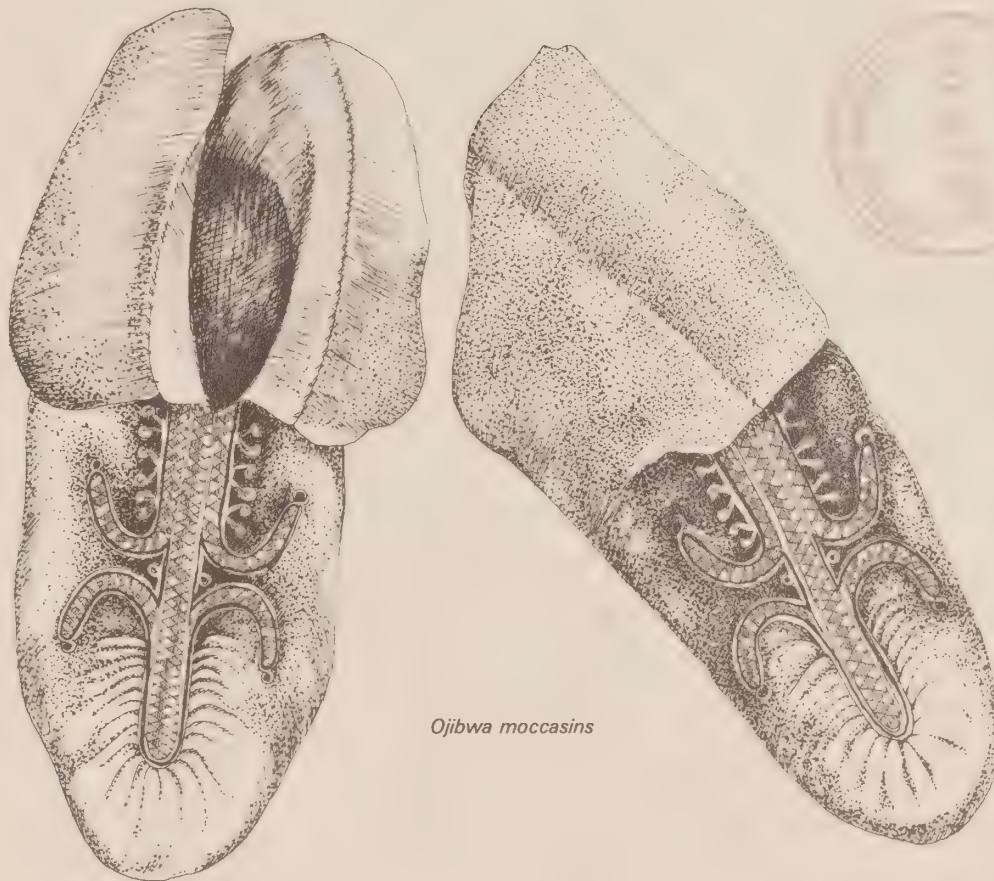


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# THE OJIBWA



*Ojibwa moccasins*

The Ojibwa Indians once roamed the northern fringes of the Great Lakes. Shortly after the Europeans arrived in North America, the Ojibwa expanded their territory west into Wisconsin and Minnesota, and onto the Plains; other Ojibwa moved to the southeast into what is now southern Ontario.

The Ojibwa (whose name may mean "people whose moccasins have puckered seams") speak several closely related dialects of the Algonkian tongue; linguistically they are allied to the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Algonquin Indians. In the 1700s, at the time of their greatest

distribution, they are believed to have numbered as many as 25,000. Various groups of Ojibwa have been called Chippewa, Saulteaux (so-called because of their meeting place, which was at the falls, [sault] of Sault Ste. Marie), Bungi or Mississauga (meaning "people of the large river-mouth").

Most Ojibwa lived in a land of forests, lakes and rivers. They were so numerous, and occupied such a large territory, that they may be separated into several distinct groups or tribes including the Ojibwa of the Lake Superior region, the Mississauga of Manitoulin Island

and of the mainland around the Mississagi River; the Ottawa of the Georgian Bay area; and the Potawatomi of the region west of Lake Huron within the boundaries of present-day Michigan (of whom some moved across into Ontario in the 18th and 19th centuries). Lakes Superior and Huron are the major lakes in the area. Winters are long and cold, with snow and ice for six months of the year.

The Ojibwa economy was based on hunting, fishing and the gathering of wild plants as they depended to a considerable degree on vegetable foods. In the late summer they gathered vast quantities of wild rice (especially in Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Kenora area of Ontario), which grew in the shallow waters around the shores of lakes. The wild rice was gathered from canoes. Using a stick to bend the stalks over the canoe, they took a second stick and beat the stalks so that the grain fell into the bottom of the boat. The rice was winnowed and then dried for use during winter. It was stored in birch bark containers.

Many kinds of mammals were hunted in the forests with bows and arrows, snares, and deadfalls. Every winter the families scattered through the woods to hunt caribou and moose. In spring and summer they looked for beaver and smaller game, and caught suckers, pickerel and pike. In the fall, after they had harvested the wild rice, they speared the larger fish — trout, whitefish and sturgeon — that spawned in that season close to shore. At night the Ojibwa fished with a torch held near the water, which attracted the fish. Migrating waterfowl were hunted during the spring, as were many other kinds of birds, such as grouse, quail, and passenger pigeon.







*Wild rice gathering*

During the summer and fall, the Ojibwa lived in large village encampments. They built dome-shaped wigwams, or conical tipis which they covered with birch bark or rush mats. Larger lodges which housed several families, were also built. During the winter, Ojibwa villages broke up into small groups composed of several related families. These groups spread out across the land to hunt, using snowshoes and toboggans in deep snow.

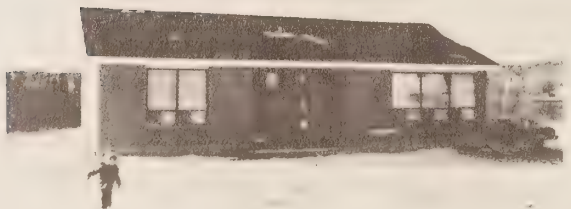
The Grand Medicine Society or *Midewiwin* of the Ojibwa was a secret religious society, whose members, *mede*, were the doctors or medicine-men of the community. The members of this secret society, which did not exist anywhere else in Canada except among some neighbouring Cree, exercised great influence upon the Ojibwa. Extensive use was made of wild plants to treat the sick, such as the application of balsam gum to wounds. The most important event of the year was the annual celebration of the Society, which was open to both men and women. People who had received visions from the supernatural were initiated into the Society in an elaborate, highly dramatic ceremony which was held during the summer. The initiate was "shot" with invisible projectiles which it was believed would bring him supernatural power. The Ojibwa ascribed a soul and special power to every tree and stone, and believed that their medicine-men, through the favour of the spiritual world, could attach this power to humans.

The world of the Ojibwa was peopled by many superhuman beings. Some spirits were thought to be unfriendly and the Ojibwa were afraid that such a spirit might be enlisted by another person in acts of witchcraft.

There have been many changes in the culture of the Ojibwa people in over 300 years of Indian-White contact. The Ojibwa joined the fur trade, supporting the French in their struggle against the English. Many served Canada in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War. Today they live on reserves, or they have moved into the industrial world of contemporary times, though many still hunt moose and trap fur-bearing animals.



*Dome shaped wigwam*



*Modern Ojibwa housing*



*Birch bark wigwam*

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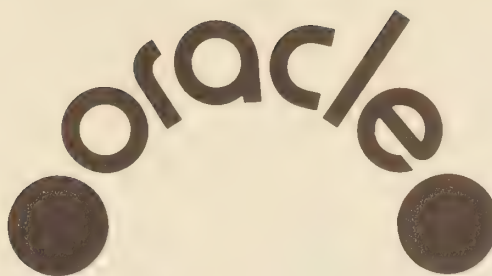
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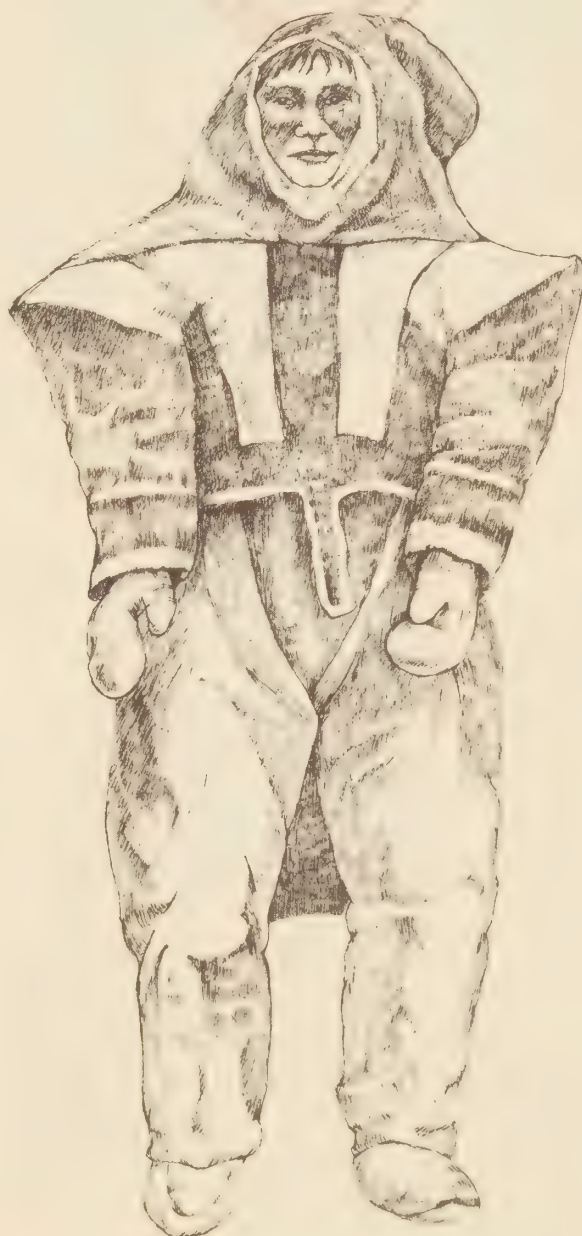
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# INDIAN AND ESKIMO CLOTHING

Before widespread availability of European-fashioned dress, clothing of the North American Indian varied according to the climate and the availability of material. Yet it was generally of the same basic type throughout what is now Canada. Men's clothing consisted of a breechcloth (a sort of apron) of deer or elk skin tied around the waist, and moccasins. Leggings or trousers, semi-tailored shirts, and fur or hide cloaks were added for warmth in the winter. Women usually wore a long slip made from the skin of a deer or mountain sheep, supported by shoulder straps. Separate sleeves were added in cold weather and moccasins, leggings and a robe were added in winter.

## ARCTIC:

The Eskimo wore clothes which the women made from caribou hide. They also dressed in sealskin, a warmer, lighter and more flexible material than caribou. Sometimes polar bear fur or other northern furs were used. In winter both men and women have always worn the well-known parka, which consists of two hides sewn together at the sides, with sleeves and a hood. The parka is pulled on over the head. Men and women wore fur trousers, which seem to have originated by sewing two leggings together. They were made of two pieces, with a joining seam down the middle in front, exactly like men's trousers today; both garments are in fact derived from the same Asian source. Inner garments similar in cut to the outer ones, but made of lighter fur, were also worn by men and women in winter. In the summer only the lighter, inner garments were worn. Fur stockings and fur boots were necessary and grass was sometimes stuffed into the boots for extra insulation. Mittens were worn everywhere, as protection against the cold, and to protect the hunters' hands from injuries. Snow goggles of wood, or more rarely ivory, with one or two slits to see through, were a necessity in the spring and were used everywhere to prevent snow blindness.



Woman's clothing — Copper Eskimo

## NORTHWEST COAST:

Shredded cedar bark was used for clothing in this area, although sometimes no clothing or a minimum of clothing was necessary because of the warm climate. In summer men wore breechcloths and women wore skirts and robes. Furs and hides were added as cloaks in cold weather. Elaborately decorated blankets of cedar bark and woven goat or dog hair were worn by people of status during ceremonies. Moccasins and leggings were known and were worn occasionally when the Indians were traveling to the interior. As protection against rain, cone-shaped hats of woven spruce root were used and waterproof capes of tightly woven cedar bark were worn on the body. The northern Tlingit made use of tailored garments of buckskin with leggings and moccasins. Men and women of high rank were fond of decoration. They wore ear and nose pendants of shell, bone, copper or the claws of animals. Strings of beads made of stone, bone or shell were wound around the neck and hung down to the waist. Both sexes could be tattooed on the face, chest, front of legs, or back of arms. The designs were inherited crests which only the owners used. Red, black, and white pigment mixed with grease were applied to the bodies of both men and women for ceremonies, depicting the inherited crests.



*Woman's clothing — Haida*



*Man's clothing — Athapaskan*

## THE SUBARCTIC:

Moose and caribou hides, and beaver and rabbit fur were the main materials used. Rabbit skins were made into robes, and leggings and moccasins were sometimes in one piece. The Hare Indians were named such because of their frequent use of the skins and meat of the hare, in addition to the caribou. Shirts and dresses of most people in this region were semi-tailored, with either fitted sleeves or sleeves added by tying them to the shoulders with a thong. Some of the most northerly tribes substituted trousers for breechcloths. Undergarments, worn in the winter, were often made of strips of rabbit skin woven together to form a soft material. Hats and mittens were also worn. Clothing was often beautifully decorated with porcupine quills, paint, seeds or birdquill. Both men and women wore their hair long.



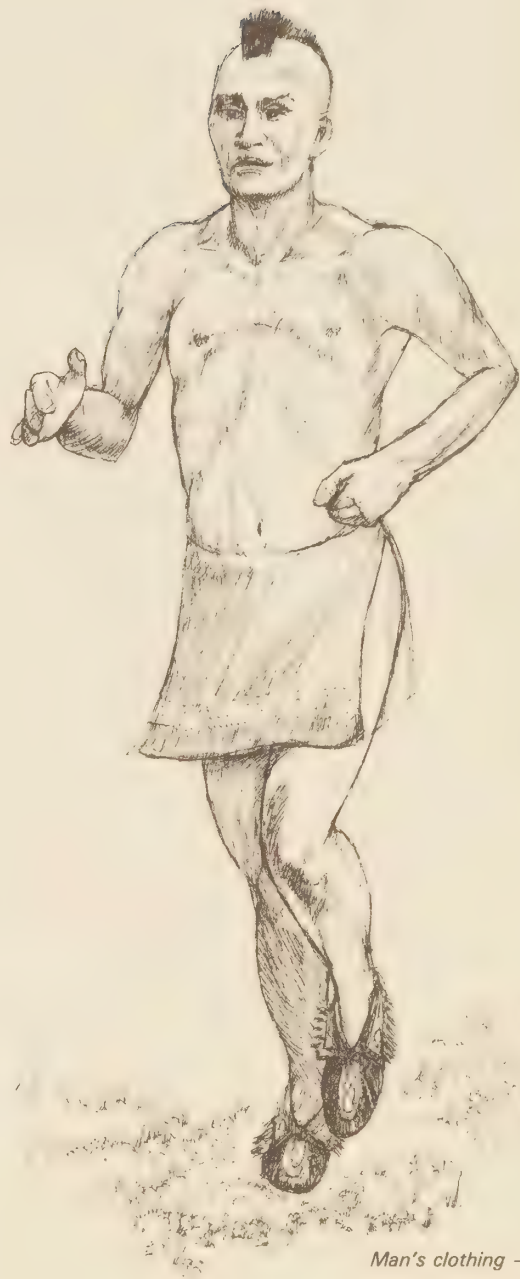
## THE PLAINS:

The basic material for clothing was deer or moose hide. In summer the men wore a breechcloth tied to the waist, and moccasins with hard soles and soft uppers. Leggings and a semi-tailored shirt were sometimes added in winter. The leggings were tied to the waist and looked very much like trousers. The shirt was made from two skins, cut or sewn together with shoulder flaps serving for sleeves. Buffalo robes were worn for warmth. The women wore more clothes than the men. Their main garment was a tube-shaped dress made from two deer or moose hides sewn together. Moccasins, which were the same type as those worn by the men, were also worn in winter. Leggings were added.

Fringe, tufts of horse hair, or animal claws and teeth decorated their clothes, which were often very ornate. Porcupine quilling, which was a most valued decoration, was replaced by very beautiful beading (done with tiny glass beads) after contact with European traders. Both men and women generally wore their hair long and braided.



*Blackfoot headdress*



*Man's clothing — Huron*

## EASTERN WOODLANDS:

The people of this region wore clothing similar to that of the Plains Indians, except that the women usually wore skirts rather than one-piece dresses. Most clothes were made of tanned deerskin, although fur robes were worn for extra protection in winter. Men wore breechcloths, shirts, leggings and moccasins. Skin robes were added in winter. Clothing and personal items were ornamented with designs, originally made with porcupine quills and later, after the arrival of the white man, with trade beads.



*Tattooing of face — Central Eskimo*

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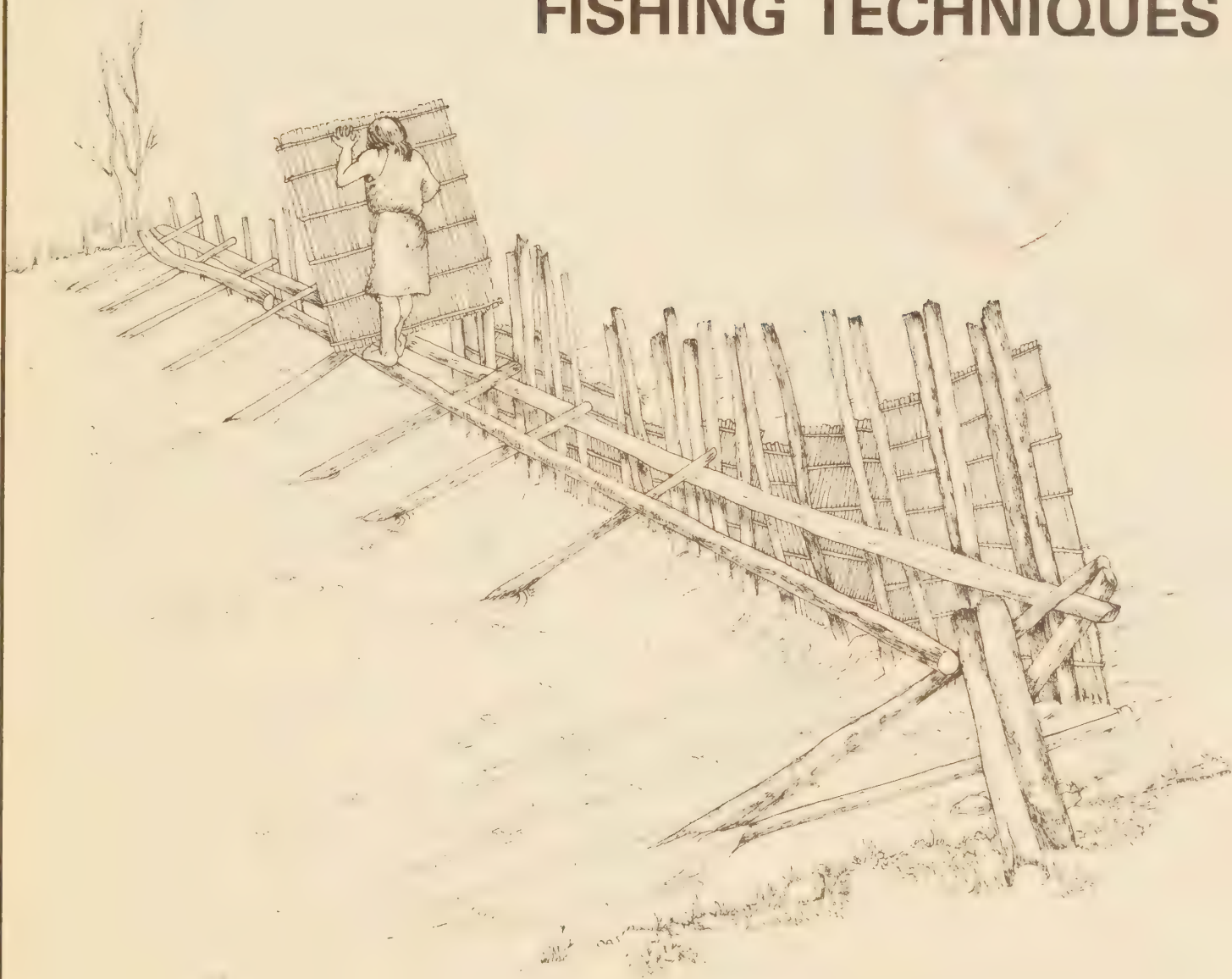


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# INDIAN & ESKIMO FISHING TECHNIQUES



*Building a fish weir — Northwest Coast*



Fishing was practised by aboriginal Indians throughout North America. It played a dominant role in the cultures of the Northwest Coast, in the lower part of the Yukon River Valley, around several large inland lakes — such as Great Slave Lake, Great Bear Lake, and Lake Winnipeg — and in a few other lake or coastal areas. It was also important in the Mackenzie River basin, the middle and lower parts of the Yukon drainage system, the Great Lakes area, and the Eastern Woodlands (where the people also looked to the rivers and seas for food).

In the Great Basin, on most of the eastern part of the Plateau, and on the Plains and Prairies, where lakes were few and the muddy rivers poorly stocked with fish, the Indians paid little attention to fishing, depending more on the greater resources of game and wild fruit. Elsewhere in Canada the fish-hook and the fish spear, the net, trap and weir, were as indispensable at certain times of the year as the bow and arrow and dried fish was a staple food in these communities during the first two months of winter.

There were numerous fishing techniques used by Indians and Eskimo; in fact almost every major technique currently used by commercial fishermen was known in the America of pre-European times. Gill nets and seines were rare, but a variety of dip nets, scoop nets, and rakes were widely used. They were highly efficient; but it has been estimated that more tons of fish were caught every year in traps and weirs than by any other technique. A weir, which is a fence or barrier that will block the passage of fish yet allow the flow of water, was usually made out of a lattice-work of timber and brush. Most weirs were built in streams, although some were built on the tidelands of the coasts where fish were impounded as the tide ebbed and flowed.



Leister

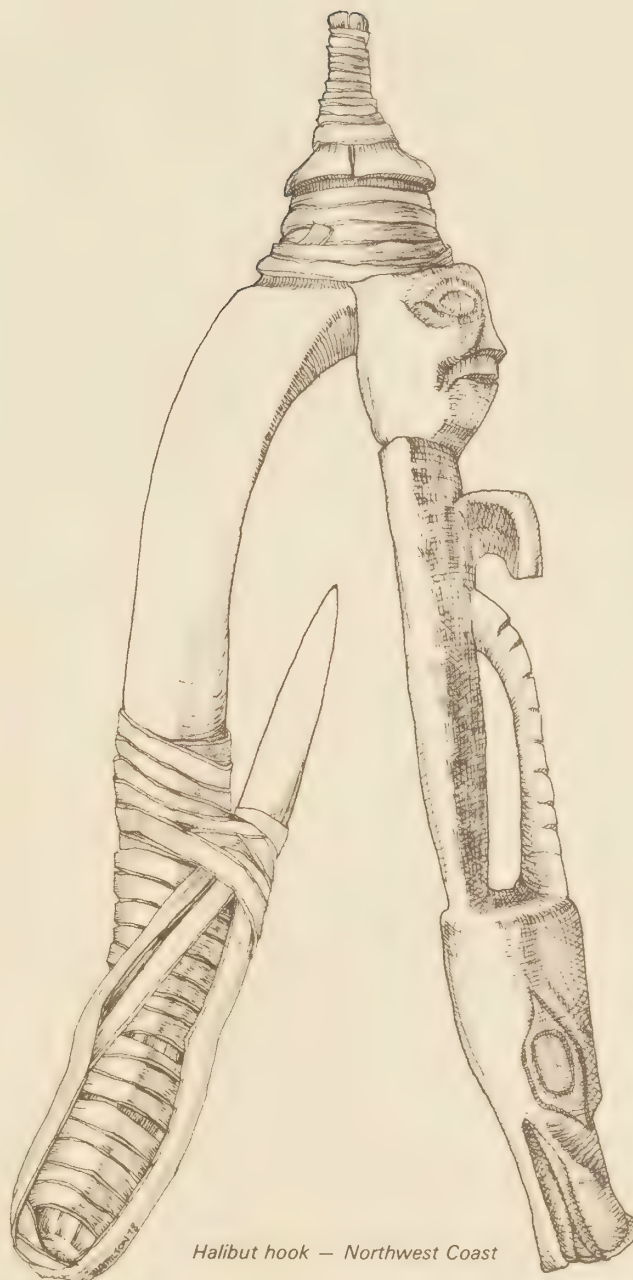


Nature herself probably suggested the idea of making artificial weirs, for there are many natural traps, like that at Hagwilget on the Bulkley River in northern British Columbia. Here, a few narrow openings in a rocky canyon let the migrating salmon through and it was in these openings that the Indians placed their basket traps; they also plied their nets and spears in the swirling waters below. The Kwakiutl and Salish Indians on the east coast of Vancouver Island built dams of stones in the shape of large horseshoes along the banks of tidal rivers to impound the salmon when the tide went out. The use of hooks was widespread especially for the larger species of fish, such as cod and halibut, salmon, the mighty sturgeon and some types of trout. Clams, mussels, and other molluscs added variety to their diet, and were so abundant they could easily be collected at almost any time of year.

Other varieties of fish also "ran" annually. Herring and smelt schooled in great numbers offshore to spawn along the beaches and eulachon (candlefish) ran in the lower courses of the larger rivers from the Fraser northward. The eulachon was prized for its oil and fat; a wick could be inserted after the fish had been dried, and it could be burned as a source of light. None of these species equalled the salmon in importance however, except that great mammal, the mighty whale which the Nootka Indians of Vancouver Island hunted bravely from dug-out canoes.

Most Indians on the west coast used single-piece fish-hooks. Fish spears were found in most areas. In the Arctic, Subarctic and Northwest Coast a special three-pronged spear, called a leister, was used. In some areas the Indians fished from canoes at night, using a torch to attract the fish. Fish were also snared, clubbed, poisoned, and shot with arrows; but these techniques were relatively restricted.

In the economy of the Northwest Coast the most important fish was undoubtedly the salmon. Five species were caught during their annual "runs" upstream, though in the north, where salmon did not migrate in such large numbers, the Haida and the Tlingit depended more on halibut. If a sudden flood destroyed the traps and weirs before the salmon arrived, the village would be faced with a shortage of food; but if the run was abundant, there would be a large surplus. Each man kept whatever fish he had caught at the weirs, but no family was allowed to go hungry, for the Indians realized that every man had his unlucky days, and that accident and sickness attacked the strongest and ablest hunter, making him dependent for a time on his fellow men. The *potlatch* functioned in part as a way of distributing the salmon from a successful village to a village in which the "run" had failed.



*Halibut hook — Northwest Coast*

Fishing represented a seasonal activity amongst most fishermen in North America, forming one part of an annual cycle which included hunting, gathering and/or agriculture. Fishing through the ice was important in the winter in some areas, whereas the use of nets and traps was usually practised in summer.

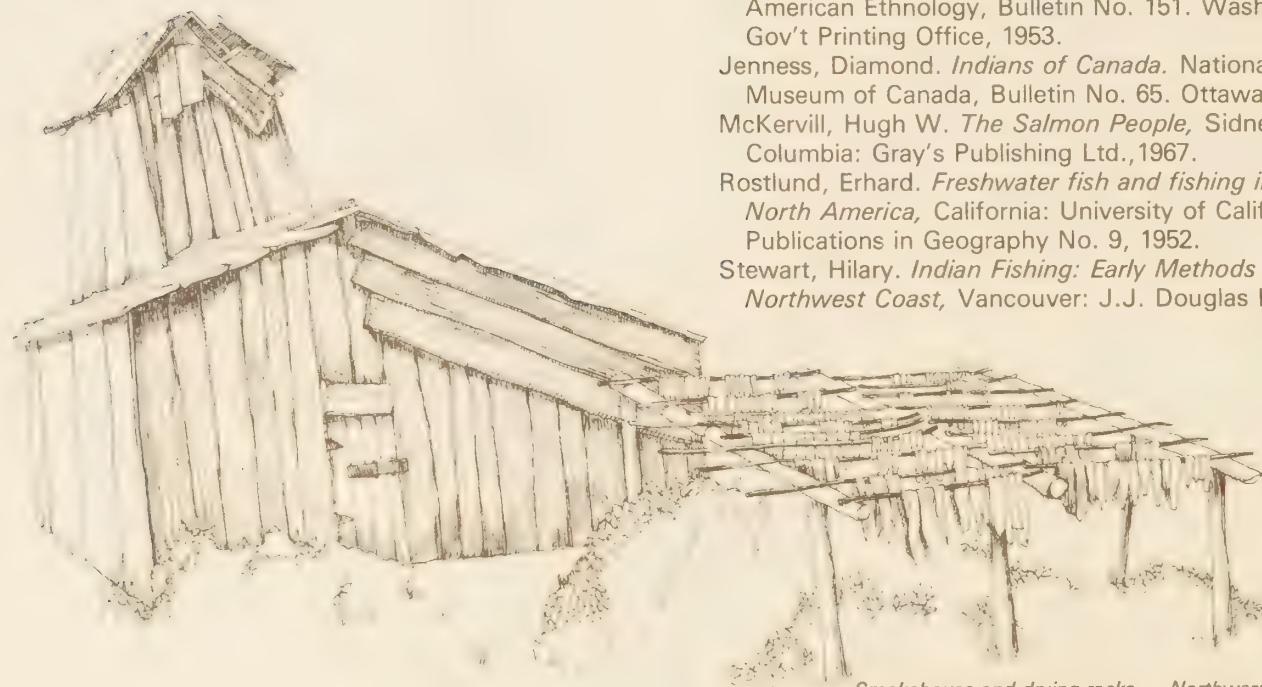
In most areas the fish were dried, primarily as a method of preserving them. But drying fish also makes them a better source of protein (a fresh fish usually contains 15 to 20 percent protein, whereas a dried fish usually contains 50 to 90 percent). Salmon was easy to preserve. The fish could be smoke-dried so that it would keep for a considerable time, despite the humid climate. It was this wealth of food that allowed a dense aboriginal population to nurture itself in a rugged terrain, resulting in the elaboration of Northwest Coast Indian culture to a point where it ranks among the highest native civilizations in the New World.

Today many Indians and Eskimo particularly in the Mackenzie Basin and along the Northwest Coast, have jobs in modern commercial fisheries. Their knowledge of the waters and the habits of the fish have helped them to achieve success in the fishing industry. Many have found the demands of their new jobs similar to those of their native way of life, but more profitable.



*Interior of smokehouse — Northwest Coast*

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*Smokehouse and drying racks — Northwest Coast*

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## Indian and Eskimo Contributions to the English Language

The English and French speaking peoples of Canada have adopted many North American Indian words in everyday speech. In addition to the selection of names of animals, food and other items listed further on, there are thousands of native terms that appear on the maps of the provinces and territories of Canada. (Newfoundland is an exception as there was hardly any verbal contact with the local Beothuk before they were exterminated.)

The names of some of the provinces and territories reveal their Indian origins: Manitoba probably derives from the Cree word meaning "strait of the spirit"; Saskatchewan is Cree in origin also, meaning "swift moving river" or "running of the thaw"; Ontario is Iroquian in origin meaning "grand body of water"; Quebec is probably Algonkian in origin, describing the narrow passage of water at Cape Diamond where Quebec City is located; and Yukon is a word derived from a local Athapaskan language meaning "great river". These words were brought into common usage by the settlers and were established by the time of Confederation.

The name for the capital of Canada, Ottawa, derives from the Algonkin tribe's term "to trade", referring to the active role of these Indians in controlling trade on the Ottawa and Gatineau Rivers. Toronto, the provincial capital of Ontario, likely comes from a Huron word meaning "a place of meeting".

The name for Canada itself is usually attributed to Jacques Cartier who heard the term when he sailed up the St. Lawrence River in 1536. The Indian people spoke of "kanata". It referred however to their settlements, not to the whole area as Cartier thought.

The majority of adopted words come from the Algonkian languages which are and were spoken in the eastern part of the country at the time of European contact. As the fur trade developed and the voyageurs and explorers moved westward, they depended on their Indian guides to find their way across this vast country. The guides were Algonkian speakers, primarily from the Ojibwa and Cree tribes. These people could communicate with others speaking Algonkian languages, as far west as the Rockies. This language similarity across the country facilitated travel as the guides could obtain valuable advance information on travel routes. Both the English and French speakers adopted Algonkian words such as: caribou, moccasin, manitou, toboggan, tomahawk, totem and wapiti.

On the west coast the Chinook jargon developed with the mixing of European languages with Chinook, Nootka, and other west coast languages about the lower Columbia River. There were six different linguistic stocks on the West Coast so that a common language was needed by the sea traders who plied the coast for sea otter pelts.

It should be pointed out that a simplicity of material culture does not imply a simple language. English and French appear straightforward when compared to some of the intricate native dialects. A selection of English words with Indian origins are the following:

- BABICHE:** Thong of leather made from the skins of various animals. Derivative of the Micmac word *ababiche*, a string, or cord. The same word is used in French.
- CARIBOU:** This name for the American reindeer (*Rangifer caribou*) has come into English from French Canadian and is generally considered to be Algonkian in origin. It probably derives from the Micmac word *halibu* which refers to the caribou's habit of shovelling the snow with its forelegs to find food.
- CHIPMUNK:** The name for the striped ground squirrel (*sciurus striatus*) probably comes from the Ojibwa word for squirrel, *atchitamon* meaning head first, in reference to its movement down a tree trunk.
- CISCO:** A name applied to any of several varieties of whitefish from Central and Northern Canada. It appears to be a shortening of the French Canadian word, *ciscoette*, from the Ojibwa *siskawet*.
- KAYAK:** A small watercraft composed of a wooden frame covered and decked-over with skin. It generally has individual cockpits for one to three occupants who usually sit with outstretched legs and use a double-bladed paddle. The name is derived from the Inuit word *qakag*.
- MANITOU:** Among the Algonkian speaking Indians a supernatural being that controls nature

or an object that possesses supernatural powers. In Ojibwa, *manito*. The same word appears in French, and as in English often is used as the name of a place.

- MOCCASIN:** The soft heelless shoe of the North American Indian is called *mockasin*, *mawhcasun*, and *makisin* in various eastern Algonkian dialects. The same word is used in French (spelling is different).
- MOOSE:** This large North American mammal (*Alces americanus*) inhabits Canada and the Northern United States. It appears on the reverse side of most Canadian quarters. The name derives from several eastern Algonkian dialects, such as the Virginia Indians' *moos* and the Ojibwa *mons*, meaning "he who strips or eats off" (trees and shrubs).
- MUKLUK:** Derived from the Yupik Eskimo word *makhlaq* meaning bearded seal used on the bottom of a boot. The mukluk is a knee-high boot worn in the winter by the Eskimos and Indians of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. It has come to refer to any boot similar in shape.
- MUSKEG:** This word for low, wet land or bog comes from such words as the Ojibwa *maskeg*, and the Cree *masak*, Algonkian words meaning "swamp".
- PAPOOSE:** From a related word in Algonkian dialect for an infant or child — *papeisses*, *pappoos*, and *poupous*.
- PEMMICAN:** This was the famed Indian food of the Prairies prepared from pounded meat mixed with grease and stored in skin bags. The word comes from the Cree *pimikkan* which means "a bag filled with grease and pounded meat".
- RACCOON:** The word for this well-known animal (*Procyon lotor*) comes from such southeastern Algonkian words as *aroughcun*, *arathcoon*, and *rahaughcum*, meaning "he scratches with hands".
- SKUNK:** The name of this little animal (*Mephitis mephitis*) originated from such words as the Abenaki word, *segankw*, Ojibwa *shikag*, and Cree *sikak*.
- SQUASH:** The plant of the *Curcubita* is derived from Algonkian words such as *squonter-squash* or *askootasguash*. It was one of the many plants that were originally cultivated by the Indians. The translation of the word is "the green thing that may be eaten raw".

- TOBOGGAN:** This is the runnerless sled invented by the Algonkian speaking Indians of north-eastern Canada. The word comes from the Micmac *tubagun* or *tabagan*. The same word is used in French.
- TOMAHAWK:** This word for an Indian axe or hatchet comes from the Algonkian words such as the Micmac, *tomehagen*. The same word appears in French.
- TOTEM:** This word originated from *otem* in the Algonkian dialect. The Ojibwa *totain* signifies what particularly belongs to one "tribe, village, family, relations and crest". Totem poles carved on the Northwest coast are famous around the world. The same word is used in French.
- WIGWAM:** This word for an Indian dwelling comes from eastern Algonkian dialects such as Micmac *wigwom* and the Ojibwa *wikiwa*. The Siouan word of the Plains is *teepee*. Wigwam is a French word as well.

In addition to words, many phrases have been incorporated into the English language that draw upon Indian cultures for their inspiration. These phrases include "to go on the warpath", "bury the hatchet", "run the gauntlet", "smoke the peacepipe" and "happy hunting ground". The expression "low man on the totem pole" is a humorous form of indicating someone's lowly position in a hierarchy, not at all relevant in actual totem poles. Indian maxims and proverbs include: "It is not enough for a man to know how to ride, he must know how to fall" and "He who does not speak is not heard by God". As a final thought there is the maxim: "Never make a judgement on another person until you have walked a mile in his moccasins."

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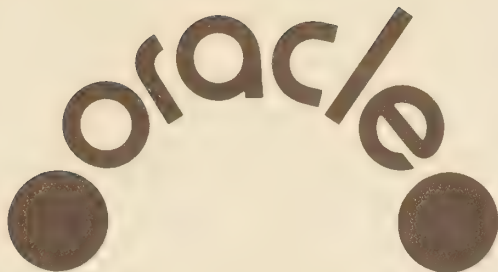
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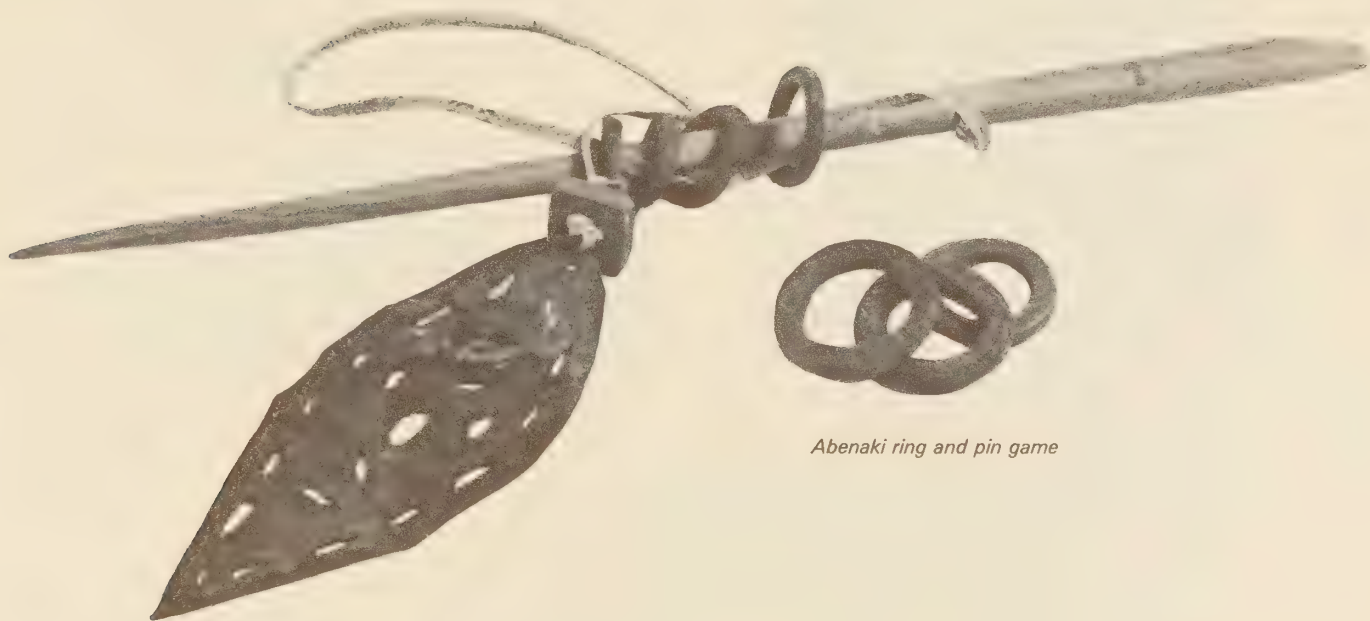


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# INDIAN AND ESKIMO GAMES



*Abenaki ring and pin game*

All was not toil in the North America of pre-European times. The Indians liked to sit and smoke, gamble, or play games. They made dolls and toys (such as tops) for their children, and taught them their future work through many of their games.

Of the games that required special toys or implements, one of the most common was hoop-and-pole, played by the children in winter. It was a game that taught skills necessary for the hunt and the battle. The hoop was usually made of willow or ash wood and had a diameter of some 381.0 mm, while the pole was a .61 m or .91 m long stick. Sometimes the children bowled their hoops along the ground at random, then threw their sticks through them; sometimes they flung the hoops into the

air and tried to catch them on their sticks as they fell. In one version, the hoop was covered with rawhide, woven so that a small hole or "heart" was left open in the centre. When a player speared the heart, he chased his opponents until he hit one with the hoop. That person then rolled it back, shouting "There is a buffalo returning to you". In another form of game, the hoop was held in the hand, with outstretched fingers in the centre. The player tried to catch a small dart thrown by his opponent between his fingers without being injured. In a variation of this game, an arrow was flung. Other outdoor games included lacrosse, a form of spear-throwing called snow-snake, which was played in winter on the snow, and various athletic contests between men, such as wrestling, running and archery.



*Iroquois (Cayuga) cornhusk doll*

For indoor amusements there were quieter ways to spend the leisure hours. People enjoyed juggling and playing cat's cradle and ring-and-pin, which was quite widespread in North America. This game was played with a pointed stick of wood or bone (the pin) which was tied by a string of skin or sinew to an object with one or more holes in it (the ring). Players swung the ring upward and caught it on the pin by inserting the tip of the pin into a hole in the ring. The game was played in many variations, with different forms of rings and pins, and according to differing rules. It is sometimes called cup-and-ball. The Copper Eskimo usually made the ring (or cup) by drilling a hole in the bone from the flipper of the bearded seal. Holes were pierced in both ends of it and in the side of the larger end. The peg was a short, pointed stick of bone, which had to be inserted in one of these holes once for each finger and toe of the player, and then one last time before the game was over. The Eskimo of Baffin Island made rings in the form of bears by carving bone or ivory. They then drilled rows of holes in the ends and sides of the carving. The player was required to insert the bone pin in the proper order, which was sometimes given in a chant while he played. Men and women of all ages enjoyed this game. Some people claimed it belonged to the spring because it hastened the rising of the sun.

Ring-and-pin games were widespread in Canada, though some forms of it were more elaborate than others. Some Plains tribes, for example, used five or six deer-foot bones which were perforated and strung on a strip of skin. A broad flap of skin pierced with holes dangled from one end, and at the other hung a sharp bone or wooden pin. A player's score depended on the number of deer-foot bones he could catch at one time on the pin. The highest score was given for catching the skin flap at the end. Athapaskans and Algonkians of the boreal forest had an identical form of the game, but only the women played it.

The ring-and-pin game is popular in various parts of the world today, and contemporary sets are produced commercially in Mexico and several other countries.





*Labrador Eskimo ring and pin game*



*Iroquois lacrosse stick*



*Coast Salish ring game*



Snowsnake

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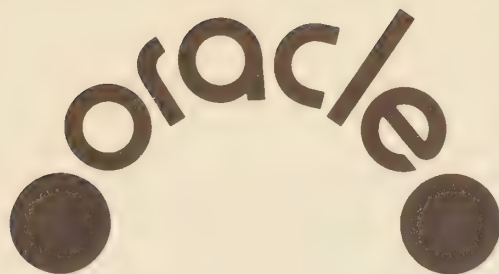
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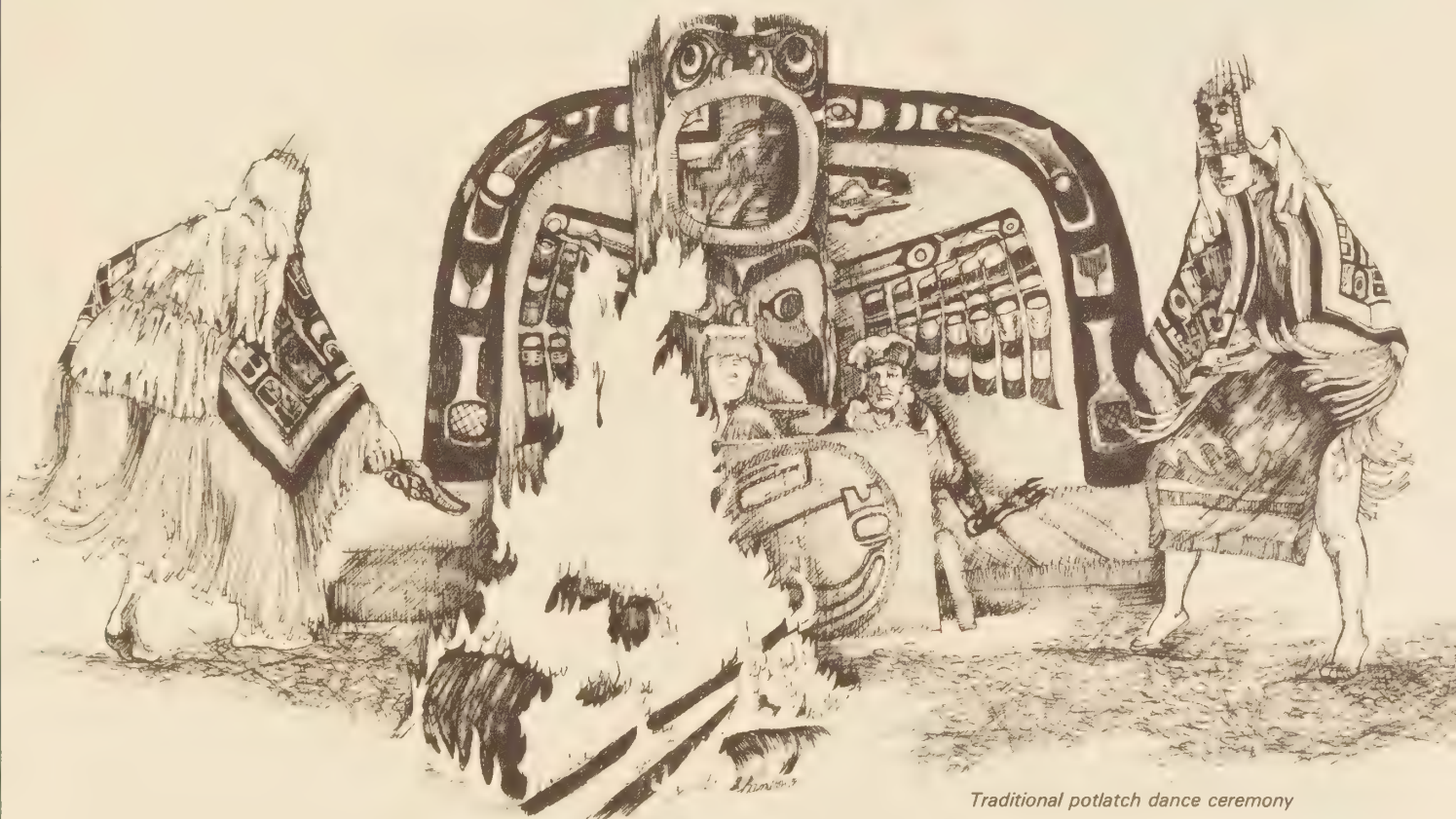


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# INDIAN AND ESKIMO USES OF FIRE



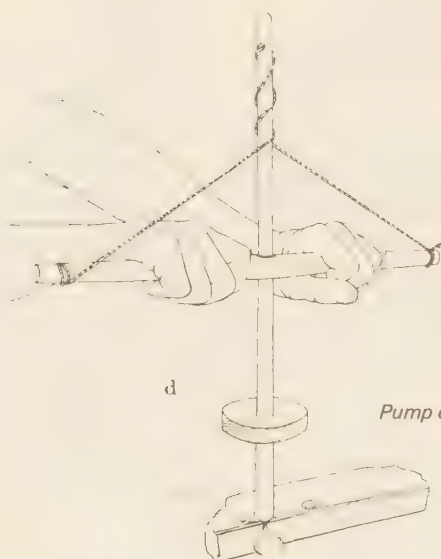
*Traditional potlatch dance ceremony*

Besides being a source of light in pre-historic times, fire was used to frighten wild animals, to provide heat, and for cooking meat. In more recent times, North American Indians used it for many other purposes, such as for baking bread, firing pottery and hollowing out logs for making canoes and large feast bowls.

Because the Indians travelled about so much, one of their main difficulties was starting a new fire after each move. Most of the early techniques involved friction to

ignite prepared timber and start a fire; two pieces of wood were rubbed until enough heat was generated. In some Athapaskan tribes, and among most of the northern Algonkian, the bow drill was used. It consisted of a spindle of white ash or slippery elm, with a hearth of dry basswood. The string for the bow was made of the inner bark of moosewood or leatherwood tree. In only a few instances was the bow drill found south of the present-day border between the United States and Canada. The Iroquois on both sides of the border used

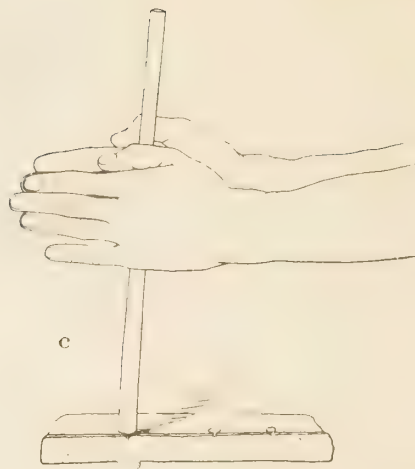
what is called the "pump drill" for ceremonial fires. It was usually made of well-seasoned slippery elm, and consisted of an upright shaft approximately 1.22 m long and 2.54 cm in diameter, with a small wheel set upon the lower part to give it momentum. A string attached to a bow about .91 m in length was set in a notch at the top of the shaft. The lower part rested on two pieces of punk wood; when ready, the string was coiled around the shaft by turning it with the hand. The bow was then pulled downwards, thus uncoiling the string and revolving the shaft towards the left. By the momentum given to the wheel the string was drawn up again. This alternate revolution was continued until sparks appeared. For ordinary occasions a drill consisting of a spindle which was twirled between the hands was used.



*Pump drill for making fire  
NMC J2437*

A few types of stone — pyrites and some flints — were used to start fire in pre-historic times. This strike-a-light technique is also called the percussion method in contrast to the friction methods that were generally in use in North America at the time of European contact. Other fire-making techniques used by the Indians included the fire plow, in which the end of a stick was rubbed vigorously back and forth in a groove. Also used was the fire saw; a dry spot in a fallen ironwood tree was selected, and a stick of the same wood cut and then rubbed back and forth across the tree by two people.

Fire was also used to fell trees for making dugout canoes and household utensils. One method was to tie saplings around the tree to form a small, scaffold-like structure. Sods were piled on, water was poured over, and a fire built below. By alternately hacking with stone axes and burning, the tree was finally cut through. Sometimes wet rags were used for dampening the trunk and localizing the action of the fire.



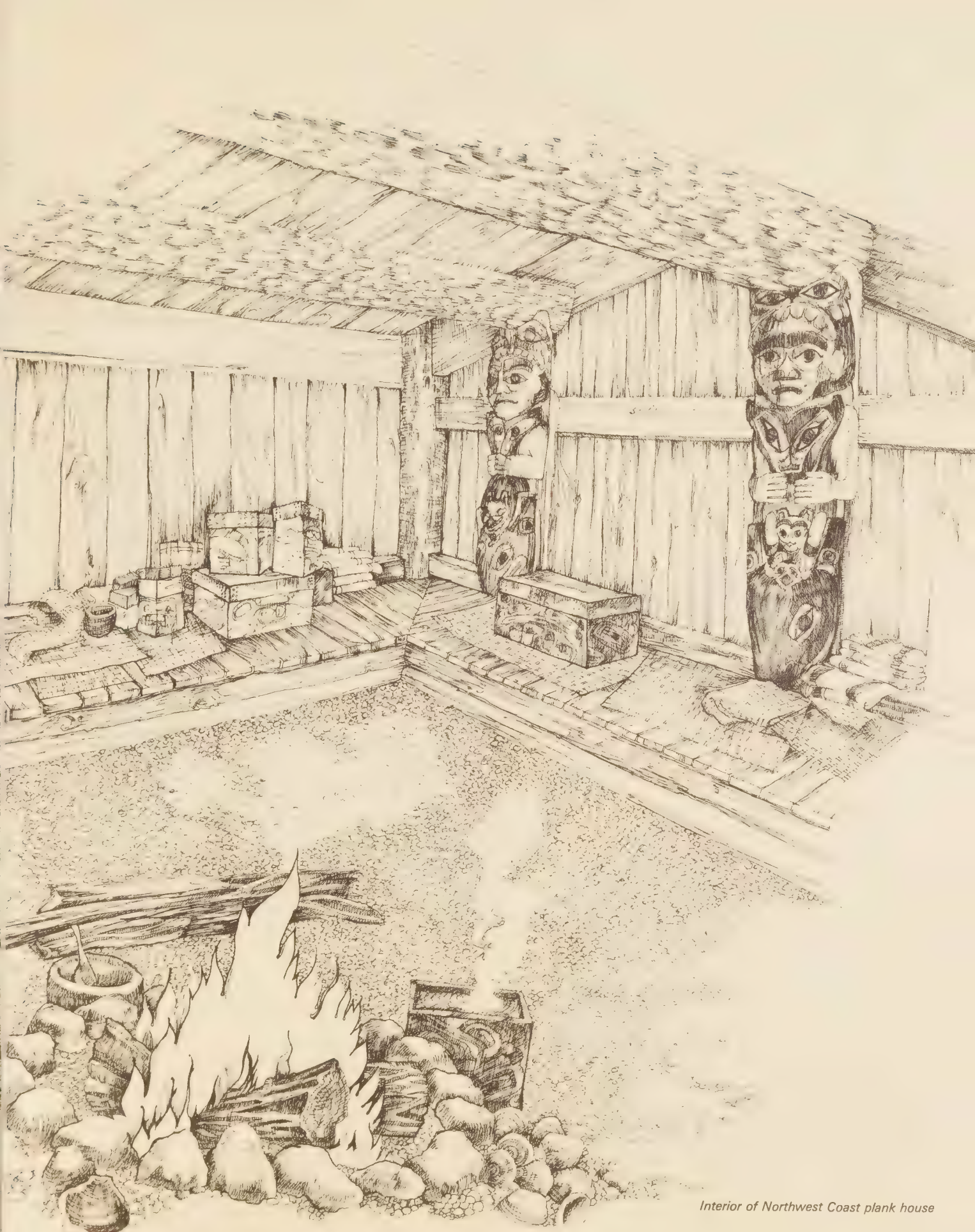
*Hand drill for making fire  
NMC J2437*

Fire was very important in food preparation. While most of the foods used by the Iroquois seem to have been boiled, such methods as baking on a flat stone, roasting or cooking in the red-hot embers and broiling on spits or sticks into the ground before the fire, were also common. Pits of suitable size were often dug in the side of a convenient bank or clay deposit. A fire was then built, the coals removed, and corn squash, roots and other foods baked by covering the pit with ashes. Archaeologists often come across the remains of such pits.

Two boiling techniques were used. One was direct-fire boiling, which involved placing a cooking vessel containing liquid near a fire. The other technique was stone boiling, in which heated stones were immersed in a liquid. Both methods were widespread in Canada, although direct-fire boiling was much more common in the Arctic, where stone vessels were the rule, and in the Prairies, where pottery cooking utensils were used. In the western Sub-arctic and the Northwest Coast (where inflammable vessels of wood, bark, basketry and hide were used) stone boiling dominated. In the other regions there were large areas where both types of cooking were known and used, but as pottery became more and more common, stone-boiling tended to be replaced by the direct fire method.

The softening effect of hot water on wood was also known. It was used to widen the beam of a new canoe (which was filled with water into which hot stones were placed). Spreaders were then driven in from gunwale to gunwale. The Kwakiutl were able to soften small pieces of wood by using a method that came close to the steam box of the modern boatwright. They also made molds in which steam-softened pieces of wood were put and left to set in the desired form.

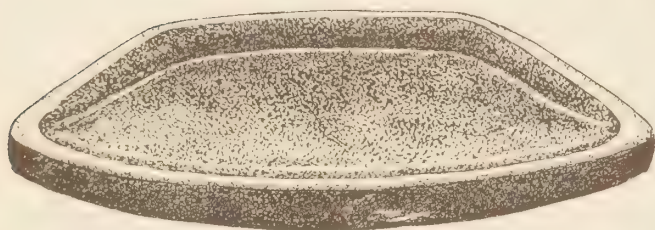




*Interior of Northwest Coast plank house*



The Eskimo lighted their winter dwellings with stone lamps which burned oil from the blubber of sea mammals, or in the case of the inland Eskimo, from the fat of the caribou. The coastal Eskimo also used these lamps for cooking, fashioning their cooking pots from soapstone. In the summer months they cooked outdoors, using driftwood for their fires, or the fuels supplied by their treeless homeland — heather, dwarf willow, and the creeping dryas. They made fire in two ways; by striking lumps of pyrites together, or by friction with a thong drill. Although both fire-making techniques were widely used throughout North America, the blubber lamp was the Eskimos' own creation.



Kudlik



Eskimo with bowdrill

NMC 39674

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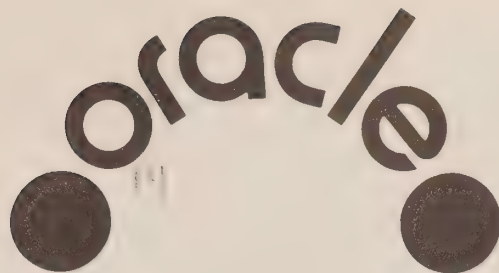
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# THE WIGWAM



*Birch bark and skin wigwams*

The wigwam was the most characteristic house of the Algonkian Indians, who lived in the Great Lakes region of North America. It differed from the tipi, which resembled a cone and was tilted so that its open top provided ventilation without letting in the rain. There were also conical Algonkian wigwams.

A wigwam was built with long, straight poles; willow poles were considered especially suitable. Pairs of poles were set vertically in the ground and bent over to form a series of arches. Horizontal poles were then firmly tied to the arch poles in order to form a dome-shaped framework.

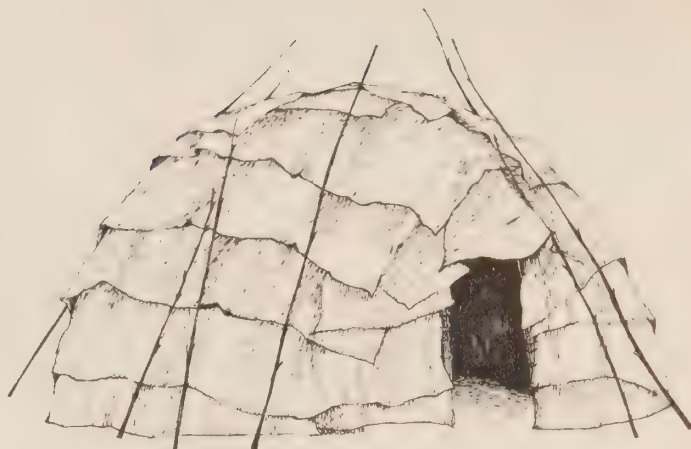
The framework was covered with either bark, woven or sewn rush mats, or with hides. Each of these coverings had its advantages and its disadvantages. Skin coverings were wind resistant, non-inflammable and easy to roll up for a move. When skins got wet, however, it took at

least twenty-four hours for them to dry. Bark was rain-proof, but became brittle when the weather was cold and had to be warmed before it could be rolled or unrolled. Skillfully woven rush mats shed rain and provided protection against the cold. They were, however, heavier and bulkier to transport than rolls of bark.

Wigwams varied in size and shape. Single families usually lived in a small, round wigwam; larger social groups, such as extended families (where, for example, a son and his family might be living with his father's family) built larger, elongated models. It was usual for a wigwam to be around 3.05 m to 3.60 m in diameter and 2.44 m or 3.05 m high. The floors were strewn with the needles from the fir tree to keep away the dampness; often a covering of soft animal skins, such as sealskins and deerskins, or rush mats was placed over the fir needles for the people to rest on.

The wigwam was a very suitable type of house for the Great Lakes Algonkian Indians. Because the economy of these Indians was based on hunting wild animals and gathering plants, they often had to move their camp sites. When moving camp, they stripped the wigwam coverings from the framework of poles and carried them from place to place. The pole framework was left standing, as trees for a new framework could be found at the next camp site.

In some parts of the northern Yukon, suitable poles were hard to find, so coverings and poles were carried from camp to camp. The covers of the northern dome-shaped houses were sometimes made of sphagnum moss, which has excellent insulating properties.



*Dome shaped wigwam*

Today the Indian people live in houses much the same as those of other Canadians; but wigwams were used until quite recently, and can still be seen standing in a few regions. A housing program, developed by Indian and Government representatives, which will enable Indian bands to plan, build and manage their own housing on reserves, was announced by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs in September, 1977.



*Birch bark wigwam*

Driver, Harold E. *Indians of North America*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969.

Jenness, Diamond. *Indians of Canada*, National Museum of Canada, Bulletin 65, Ottawa: 1955.

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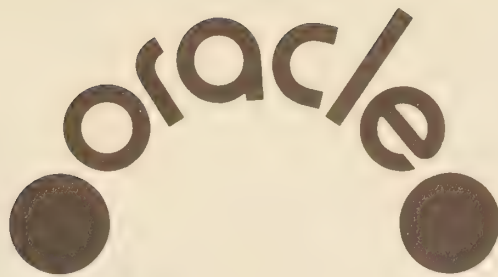
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# FALSE FACE CURING SOCIETY





The Iroquois of the eastern Great Lakes area made a wide variety of masks. The most famous are the corn husk masks of the Husk Face Society and the carved wooden masks of the False Face Society. The grimacing False Faces, which were used by the Iroquois in the curing rites of the False Face Society, are especially notable. The masks are wooden portraits of several types of mythical beings or apparitions that appeared in dreams, who, the Iroquois say, lived only a little while ago in the far rocky regions at the rim of the earth or wandered about in the forests.

Most of these masks, which are "fed" with tobacco to keep their spirit alive, are painted red or black. They have deep-set eyes which are set off by gleaming metal eye-plates and large, bent noses. The arched brows are deeply wrinkled and sometimes divided above the nose by a lengthwise crease. The mouth is the most variable feature, and runs through a whole range of expressions depending on mood, function, and locality. Sometimes it is pursed as if for whistling; sometimes it is puckered with conventionalized tongue and spoon-like lips, which may be funnel-shaped to imitate blowing ashes in curing rites. Or the mouth may reveal the teeth or have a protruding tongue. Other masks have large, straight, distended lips which may be twisted up at one corner with

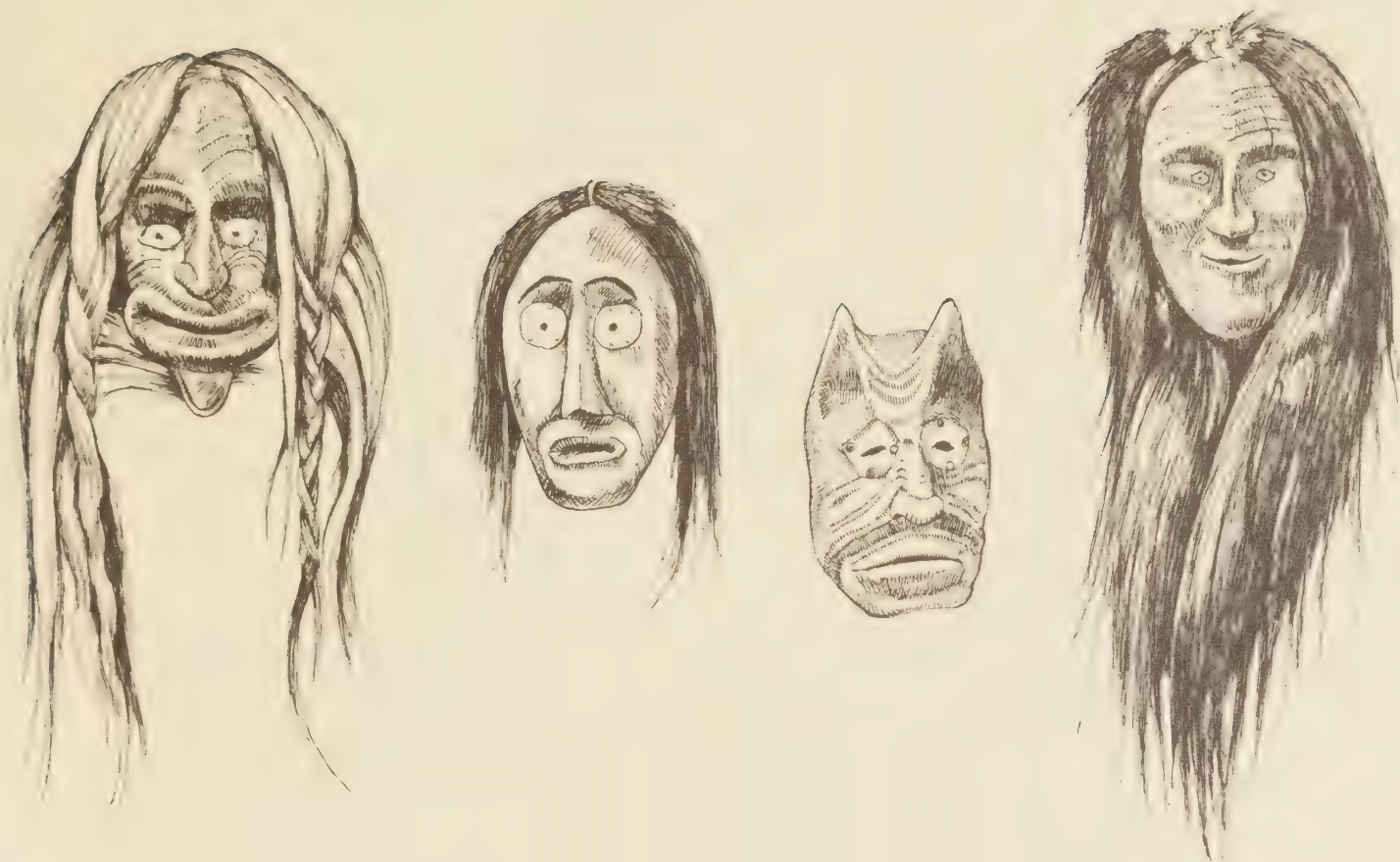
an accompanying bent nose, or both corners may turn down in a distorted arrangement producing a frightening effect. A series of wrinkles usually heightens the distorted look and cheek bones are sometimes suggested. A prominent chin, common to some masks, is used as a handle for adjustment by the wearer.

The faces are framed by long hair usually cut from black or white horses' tails, which fall on either side from a central part. Before the Europeans introduced horses, corn husk braids, or tresses of buffalo mane served as hair.

The significance of the masks to the Iroquois lies not in their artistic value, but in their power. The beings they represent instruct people to carve likenesses of themselves. They say that supernatural power to cure disease will be conferred on the human beings who make the masks when they feed the masks, invoke the beings' help while burning tobacco and sing a curing song.

The False Face Society is just one of the many curing societies found among the Iroquois. And though it was not necessarily the most important, it is the best understood of all the societies because of intensive research. Members of the society put on the false faces to visit





the lodge of a sick man who has declared himself in need of a cure. With their masks on, and shaking rattles made of turtle shells, the members who are to effect the cure, creep towards the sick man's home speaking a nasal "language". They scrape their rattles against the door, and enter the house, continuing to shake the rattles. Then ashes and tobacco are used in a ritual meant to drive away the cause of the patient's illness. Anyone who is cured becomes a member of the society, or a man or a woman may join if he or she has a dream signifying that it is necessary to become a member. Most curing ceremonies were traditionally held in private in order to achieve the best effect but public ceremonies were held at the Midwinter festival for people who had been cured before. This was considered essential in order to prevent disease from reappearing. Ashes were sprinkled over the people to drive away the demons of disease.

The importance of the false face masks can be understood by describing how they are made. To reinforce the life in the masks, the faces are carved from a living basswood tree but maple, pine, or poplar may also be used. The mask is cut free from the tree only when nearly finished. During the carving, prayers are said to the spiritual forces which are supposed to be repre-

sented by the mask and tobacco is burned before the mask in order to please its spirit. The particular form of the spirit is revealed to the carver through prayers and the burning of tobacco. If the mask is begun in the morning, it is painted red; if its is begun in the afternoon, it is painted black. This is in accordance with the belief that the first False-Face made a daily journey following the path of the Sun; thus his face would appear red in the morning as he came from the east and black in the afternoon as he looked back from the west. Red masks are thought to have more power. There is also a divided mask, painted half red and half black, for a being whose body is torn in two. To the Indian, he stands at the middle of the sky looking south, his red cheek to the east (which suggests life) and recalls the divided body of a patient who may be paralyzed.

The False Face Curing Society was an integral part of the Iroquois belief system. The society always tried to cure as many patients as it could so that they would become new members, for this form of group participation was said to increase its effectiveness as more people became involved in the curing ceremonies. Carvings of False Face masks are made for sale to collectors and museums today, although these are not considered to have spiritual forces.



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# THE KAYAK

The kayak is a narrow, skin-covered boat used by Arctic hunters in search of sea mammals and caribou, for fishing and sometimes for transportation. These hunting boats, quiet in use, were found all over the North, as far west as Siberia, among the Chukchi and Koryak; and as far east as Greenland and Labrador, among the Eskimo.

There are many types of kayak — most are extremely lightweight and manoeuvrable, yet differing from one another in a number of details. In fact, each Eskimo group in North America, with the exception of those living inland, or where the sea is rarely open, seems to have had a distinctive kind of kayak which was carefully built to meet local conditions of hunting, sea, and land or ice portaging. As a result, some types are far more seaworthy than others, and the weight of the hull varies, even within a basic design. The general appearance of all the kayak models, by tribal classifications, shows the influence of tradition and, in many cases, displays — in either the shape or the decoration — a tribal totem or mark.

Usually these hunting boats are long (varying between 3.05 m and 9.14 m), narrow (38.10 cm to 81.28 cm across), and low (17.78 cm to 38.10 cm); they are completely covered across the top, except for a manhole in

which the paddler sits. Kayaks are designed to be quiet and agile, yet they must be sturdy enough to withstand heavy seas. The frame is made of lightweight driftwood. Major lengthwise support comes from the gunwales (the upper corners where the sides meet the deck), thus eliminating the heavy keel found in other types of boat. Skins from which the hairs have been scraped completely cover the frame. A hoop mounted on the frame forms the outline of the manhole, and the skins are lashed to the hoop with thong. Most Eskimo use seal and caribou skin.

Kayakers enter their boats along the shore, sliding down into the manhole and extending their legs beneath the deck. Some hunters wear waterproof parkas which are specially constructed so that the waist fits tightly over the manhole and water cannot get in. Fastened to the deck, under thongs stretched across it, are the hunter's weapons, of which the harpoon is the most important.

The boat is usually propelled by a lightweight, double-bladed paddle, although single-blade paddles were sometimes used when great speed was not required. When hunting sea otters in Alaska, however, the double-bladed type was always used.



The Eskimo invented many ingenious devices for lashing weapons to their kayaks. They also invented the kayak stand, which is a special tray standing on three legs on the deck of the boat for holding the harpoon line in a neat coil so that it plays out when needed. When not in use the kayaks were removed from the water and taken to the village where they were stored upside down on high racks to prevent the dogs from eating the skin covers. The boats were light so that one or two men could easily carry them; some were fitted with special hand-holds at each end. In most regions, though, the kayak was so light that a man could carry it on his head without much effort, the coaming resting against his forehead. In this way he was able to wander over the ice out to the open water or overland from fjord to fjord, often saving himself an extremely long journey.

The Aleuts and Pacific Eskimo made a two-man kayak equipped with two manholes; a three-man form, developed under the influence of Russian colonists in Alaska, could carry a passenger and two paddlers. Some of the Indians of Alaska and the Yukon Territory made a kind of canoe which, although shaped like a kayak, had either no deck or else only a partial one; this is not considered a true kayak.

When the Greenland seal hunter, as he still does, has lashed his water-proof jacket around the coaming and about his wrists and face, he is so much a part of his boat that he will allow himself to capsize while a heavy sea rolls over him. To return to the upright position without getting out of the manhole requires a good

sense of balance, considerable strength and skilled use of the paddle. The manoeuvre, called the "kayak roll", is only one of over two dozen known methods of recovering from a capsize.

Kayaking has become a popular sport among people in North America and Europe, and efficient lightweight, fiberglass kayaks are now available. The "kayak roll" has also been adopted and is considered one of the most exciting features of this new sport.

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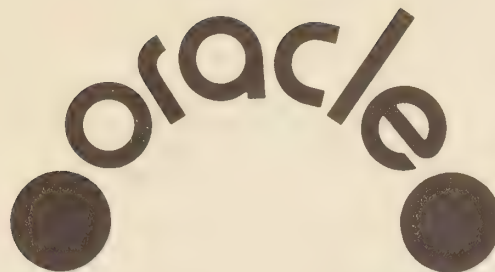
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# BARK CANOES



*Micmac bark canoe*

Since his arrival in the New World, the white man has admired the bark canoe of the North American Indian. It is one of the finest forms of watercraft ever to be developed and is well suited to inland waterways. The traditional bark canoe was lightweight and a 4.20 meter canoe weighing some 22.68 kg could easily be carried over the many portages of central and eastern Canadian forests. The canoes were also quite strong, and although susceptible to damage from rocks, could carry large loads in very shallow water. They were easily manoeuvred by one man with a single-blade paddle and therefore ideal for the fast streams and frequent shoal waters found in the woodland areas. Some, specially built, were sturdy enough for the rough waters of the bays along the Atlantic coast.

Nearly all Algonkian, Iroquoian and Athapaskan-speaking Indians made bark canoes and their use was widespread throughout Canada and the Great Lakes region. Birch bark was the most common kind of bark in use but others, such as spruce bark and elm bark were also utilized. The bark was removed from large trees early in the summer. It was taken off in a single sheet, which was

then rolled and carried back to camp. The construction of an ordinary canoe required the continued labour of a man and a woman for about two weeks. The bark was unrolled and flattened on the ground, and then a wooden building frame in the form of a outline of the canoe was weighted in place so that the shaping could begin. This was done by bending the exposed bark up around the building frame to form the sides, which were held in position by stakes driven into the ground all around. The stakes provided a temporary means of supporting the bark in the desired position whilst the gunwales and ribs were prepared. The gunwales and ribs, as well as the special stem piece, had to be steamed or soaked, bent into shape, and allowed to dry. Then the gunwales and stem piece were lashed to the bark, with roots from spruce or jack pine trees.

When the gunwales were attached and completed, the stakes were removed, and an inner lining of strips, usually from the cedar tree just beneath the bark, were prepared and the ribs inserted with their ends tucked under the inner gunwale. The ribs shaped the hull of the canoe while holding the inner lining in position, and also

gave the hull considerable strength. Then all the seams and joints were caulked with pine or spruce gum or pitch to make them watertight. The canoe cover was often ornamented with a scraped design or a drawing indicating ownership. The extreme lightness of the birch bark canoe was some compensation for its fragility. In any case, a damaged canoe could be patched in a few hours with a piece of birch bark, a few threads of spruce root, and a little spruce gum.

Europeans quickly adopted the canoe for their own use, so that it became familiar all over the North American continent. Early fur traders travelled by canoe, and it played an important part in the exploration and opening up of the New World. In fact, the canoe is still used for conveying prospectors, surveyors and explorers into regions beyond the reach of the railway or other forms of transportation. However, the supply of suitable bark declined in many areas and canvas was used as a substitute for many years. Though modern tools were introduced at all stages of development of the manufacturing process, the basic design survived. Today that basic design is used for modern canoes made of fiberglass or

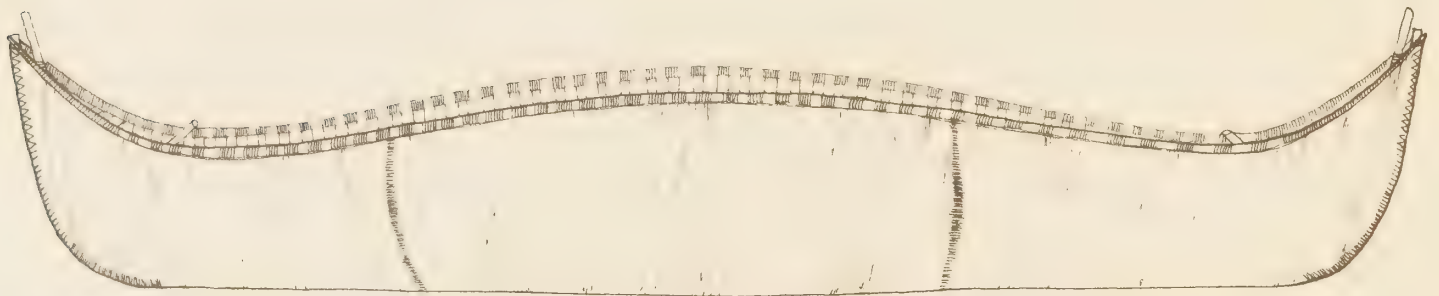
lightweight metal, and there are still a few Indians making birch bark canoes.

Of all archaic watercraft, the canoe and Kayak share the distinction of having survived in modern form all over the world.

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*Beothuk bark canoe*

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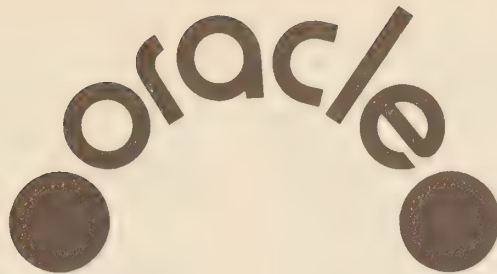
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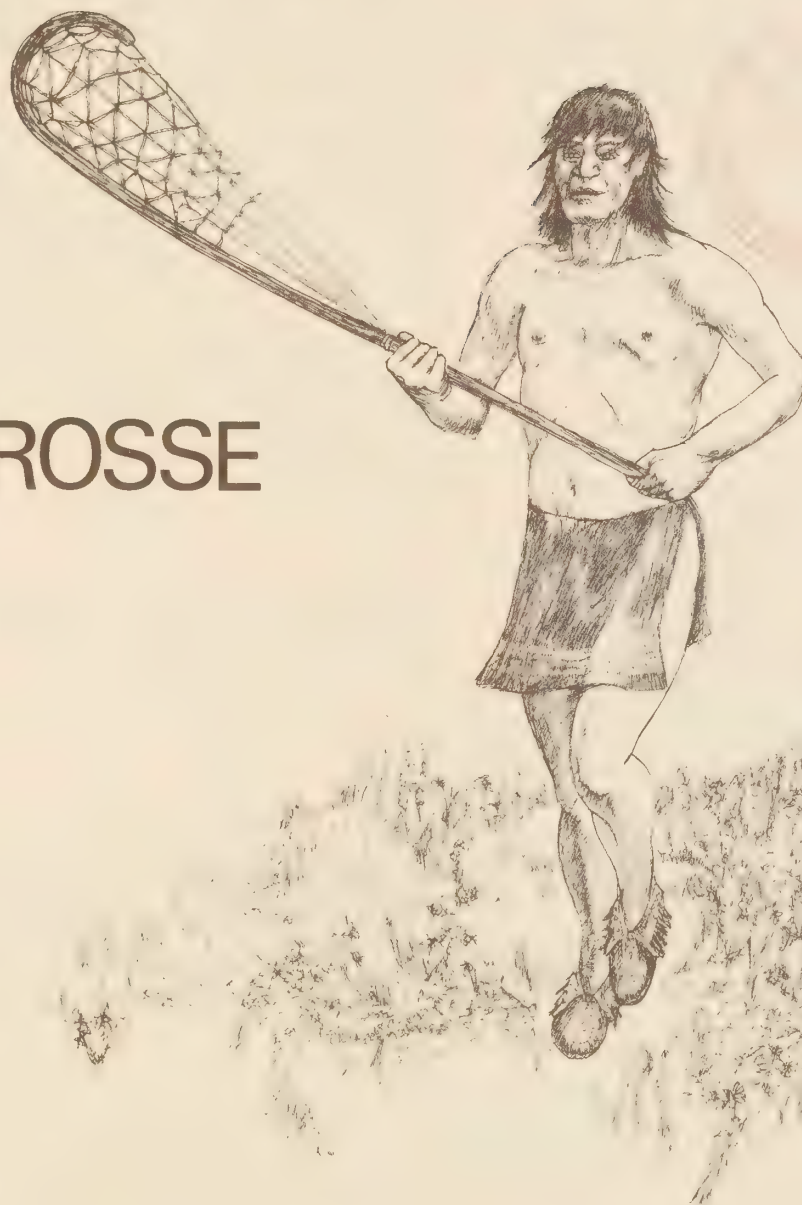


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# LACROSSE



*Playing lacrosse*

Of all the team sports played in North America before Europeans arrived, relay racing and lacrosse have become the most well known. Lacrosse originated with several North American Indian groups, including the Iroquois and the Algonkian tribes of the Great Lakes region. The game was played by two opposing teams, all members having a netted racket or stick.

The sticks varied in size, but usually measured about .91m in length. The netting was traditionally made of *wattup* (an Ojibwa word meaning the small roots of spruce trees) which were also used for sewing birch bark canoes. *Wattup* was eventually replaced by deerskin, which was used for both the strings and the ball.

The object was to throw and catch a ball with the racket in such a way that the ball could be thrown through a goal being defended by the opposing team. The original ball was about the size of a tennis ball, although it differed slightly from tribe to tribe. Deerskin or rawhide, stuffed with hair and stitched with sinew, was used by many of the tribes, but the Ojibwa and Potawatomi (at the mouth of the Detroit River) used a heavy wooden ball, generally containing a knot, while other tribes used improvised balls made from the bark of pine trees.

Lacrosse, which the Ojibwa called *baggataway*, originated as an outdoor sport. It was played on fields from 457.20m to 792.00m or more in length, depending on the number of players, so that the opposite goals might even be in different villages. The ability to run and the skillful use of the netted racket, were essential features of the game; a player holding the ball in his racket was allowed to run with it until chased down by an opponent. The player would then try to pass the ball to a teammate in the open field, all the while trying to advance towards the goal. When the game was played on horseback, as in the Plains, the goals were extremely far apart.

The continuous running made lacrosse a very fast sport; it has even been called the fastest game on two feet. Because of the speed, and the use of rackets, it was also a heavy contact sport. Some games ended in, or were interrupted by, brawls or even battles. Serious injuries among both participants and spectators were common. Brawls were intensified by the enormous size of some of the Indian teams, which could well include the entire young adult population of the tribe. In many cases war paint was worn, and the game was even used by Chief Pontiac, on one occasion, as a prelude to a pitched battle against the garrison at Fort Michilimackinac. The game, apart from being played for pure amusement, was a means of quickening and strengthening the body and was thus a preparation for close combat in tribal warfare. Lacrosse, however, meant different things to different people; for the Iroquois it was a religious ritual. The referees were revered medicine men, and their decisions were final. Women standing along the sidelines provided encouragement and prodded the men with switches.

The stick or racket used to play lacrosse was made of birch with an oval space formed at one end. It was strung with twisted squirrel skin or with hemp. Because the curved stick looked like a bishop's crozier, the French explorers called it *lacrosse*, giving this demanding sport its modern name.

Lacrosse was formally adopted by the European settlers in Canada around 1840, when the Montreal Lacrosse Club was formed and the Canadian Lacrosse Association was founded in 1925. Canadian players developed an indoor form of the sport, which is called box lacrosse. It is played with smaller sticks, six-man teams, and rules similar to those of hockey.

Today a regulation rubber ball has replaced the old wads of moosehide or other forms of ball, and these rubber balls have been clocked at speeds of 169.05 km an hour — 24.14 km faster than the fastest baseball pitches. This greater speed results from the extra leverage provided by the use of a racket in throwing the ball.

Lacrosse has become popular in a few other countries, including the United States, Britain and Australia, where the game is played outdoors by 10-man teams. It is then called field lacrosse. Basically the game — as far as we know — has remained the same as when it was the exclusive property of the Indians.



*Ojibwa lacrosse stick*

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*Iroquois lacrosse stick*

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 National Museum of Man

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# TRAVOIS



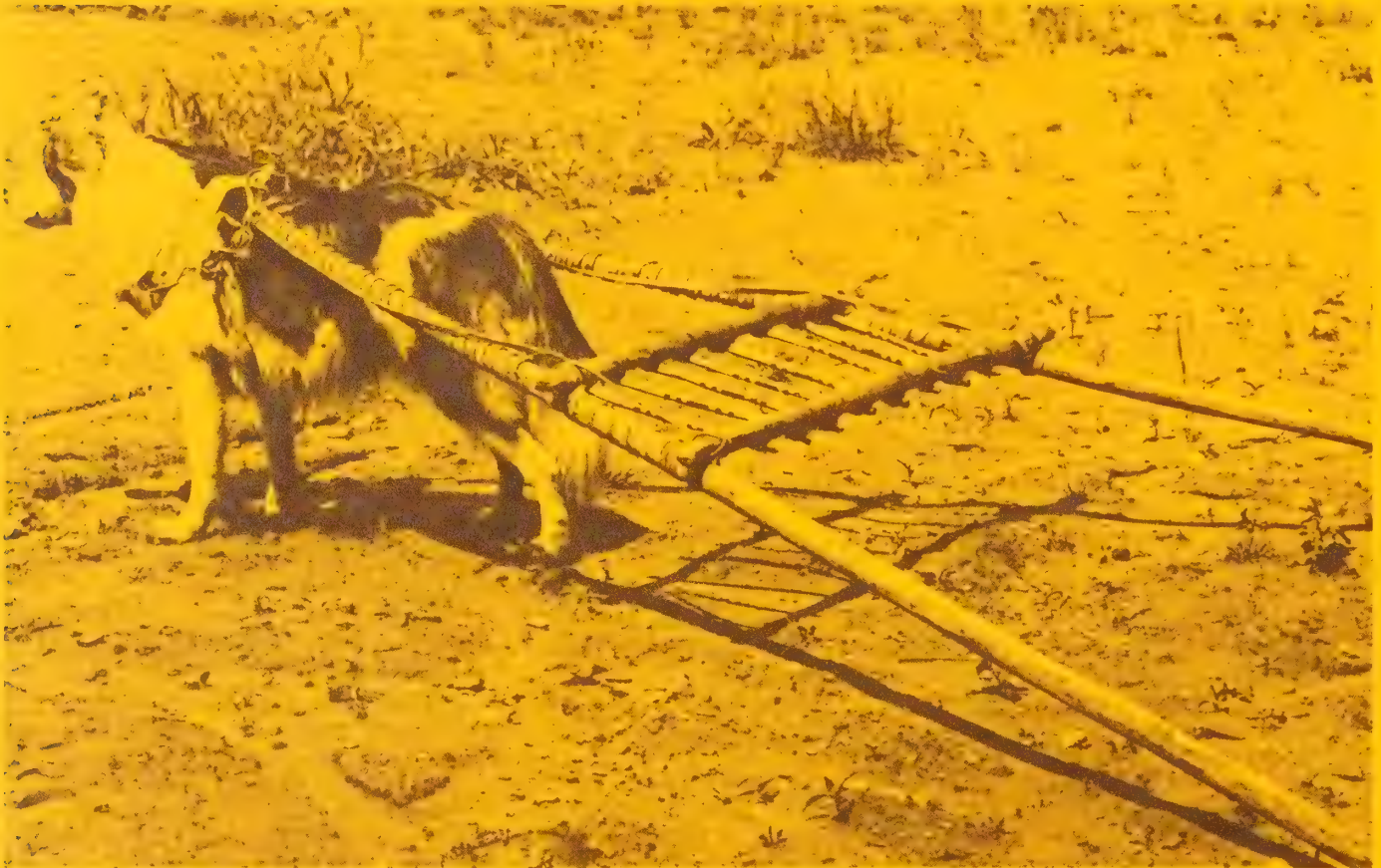
Horse with travois NMC 4197

The travois, which is seldom, if ever, used today, was a year-round means of transportation for the Indians of the northern Plains and of the Prairies of North America. Before Europeans introduced the horse, it was the only method used by the Indians of the Prairies for carrying their things over land, other than back-packing by humans or dogs.

The travois was made by setting two long poles at an angle to one another so that at one end they could be lashed together over the shoulders of a dog; the other ends dragged on the ground behind the dog. A frame of sticks, or a hoop woven with leather thongs, was fastened between the poles near the centre, providing a handy platform on which a load could be lashed. The load was then dragged along by the dog. A hunter could carry up to a quarter of a buffalo on a travois and a woman could bring in a heavy load of firewood.

When horses were acquired by the Indians, larger travois were built for horses to pull. Tents and other possessions, and even women and children, could be transported by horse-drawn travois. Dogs continued to pull the smaller travois of pre-European times, until eventually more modern means of transportation, such as the car and the snowmobile, were adopted.

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Lowie, Robert H. *Indians of the Plains*, American Museum Science Books, Garden City, New York: Natural History Press, 1954.



Dog with travois NMC 62763

Text: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada with the assistance of the National Museum of Man

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Marion Ritchie  
National Museum of Man

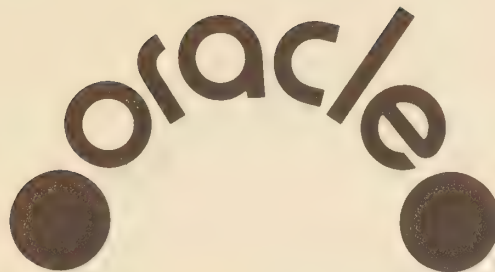
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# MOCCASINS



*Moccasins, Eastern Woodlands*

Moccasins are a type of shoe worn by the Indians and the Eskimo of northern North America. They are made of soft animal skin, such as deerskin, with the hair left on the skin for winter moccasins. Each tribe had its own distinctive style. The Blackfoot Indians, in fact, got their name from the moccasins they wore, which were either painted black or blackened by burnt Prairie grasses.

Moccasins may be ankle-length or they may extend to the hip. The word itself is Algonkian, meaning a low, puckered and instep-patched, heelless shoe. It often had an additional flap that could be brought up to cover the ankle. There are two basic types of construction, soft-soled and hard-soled. Both the sole and the upper part of soft-soled moccasin are made of a single and continuous piece of buckskin, resulting in a shoe with a very flexible sole that goes very well with snowshoes. These moccasins were characteristic of the Indians of the vast Subarctic area of Canada and of the Indians of the Pla-

teau area, the Prairies, and the Eastern Woodlands. The hard-soled type of moccasin is made in two pieces; a buckskin upper part is sewn to a heavier and stiffer piece of hide which forms the sole. This kind of shoe was used by the Eskimo in the Arctic and by United States Indians of the Great Basin and the Southwest. The Eskimo of central Canada and the Indians of the Plains and Prairies used both types.

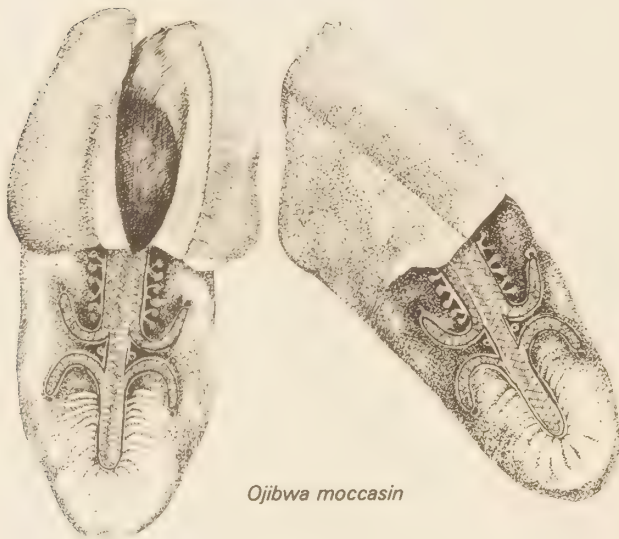
Because each tribe cut its moccasins in a different way, the Indians of the Plains and Prairies believed they could tell a man's tribe from his footprints. Patterns of decoration, carried out with porcupine quills or with moose hair embroidery, also varied from one tribe to another, and were useful in helping to identify tribal affiliations. The glass beads that are seen on many moccasins in museums were received in trade by the Indians after European settlers arrived in North America.

Moccasins have become very popular with North Americans, and many Indian groups make them especially for sale. One such group, Peigancrafts Ltd., on the Peigan Reserve in Alberta, was transformed from an arts and crafts project to a moccasin-making factory in the fall of 1975. Peigancrafts' moccasin slippers are made of shearling with rabbit fur trim and beadwork decoration. They are cut and sewn in the factory, which has a staff of eleven full-time employees, with 25 additional part-time workers; the vamps are hand-beaded by crafts people who work at home.

Another group, the Battleford Native Handicrafts Co-op Ltd., employs 13 Indians full-time, but much of the work is done by over 200 producers living on the 19 Indian reserves near North Battleford, Saskatchewan. The producers are particularly concerned with keeping Indian crafts as traditional as possible, and the people at the Co-op have been involved in researching old designs.



James Bay Cree moccasin



Ojibwa moccasin

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National Museum of Man

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# CRADLE BOARDS

Most of the aboriginal peoples of North America used cradle boards to carry their babies until they were weaned and able to walk. The use of the cradle board ensured that the baby was always with his mother and could be fed whenever he was hungry. The resulting mother-child relationship was among the warmest to be found in any society. The baby was safe and snug as he travelled on his mother's back while she moved about from place to place. When she was working he was suspended from a tree or propped against a wall where she could keep a watchful eye on him.

Indian babies wore no clothing. They were wrapped in some soft covering, such as the inner bark of trees, fur, or smooth animal skin, and then strapped or laced onto the boards. Moss, or a similar absorbent material, was placed beneath the babies as a sort of diaper. Once a child had learned to crawl, the cradle board was used to protect him from the many hazards that were to be found in and around his home — such as open fires, streams or marshes, dogs, and the cold. When he was old enough to walk, and had learned to avoid dangerous situations, he was released from the cradle.

The cradles were either flat or slightly hollowed-out troughs made from various materials. The Salish of British Columbia used finely woven cedar basket cradles; some of the Subarctic tribes used sewn birch bark; and others, for example the people of the Eastern Woodlands, used single flat boards. The Plains people used stiffened rawhide.

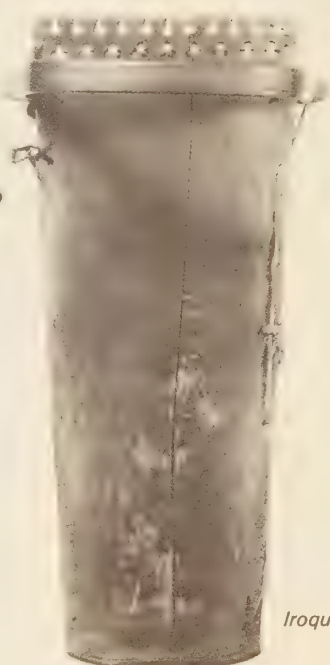
The Coast Salish, Nootka and Kwakiutl Indians of the Northwest Coast attached a soft pad, usually of cedar bark, to their hollowed-out wooden cradles. The pad was used to bind the baby's head to the board. The resulting slow pressure eventually flattened the child's forehead. This head deformation, which was considered a mark of beauty, was reported by many of the early explorers of the area. The practice of binding the baby's head to the cradle board was also widespread in the Plateau. The resulting deformation was so severe in one Plateau tribe that the people were known as Flathead Indians.



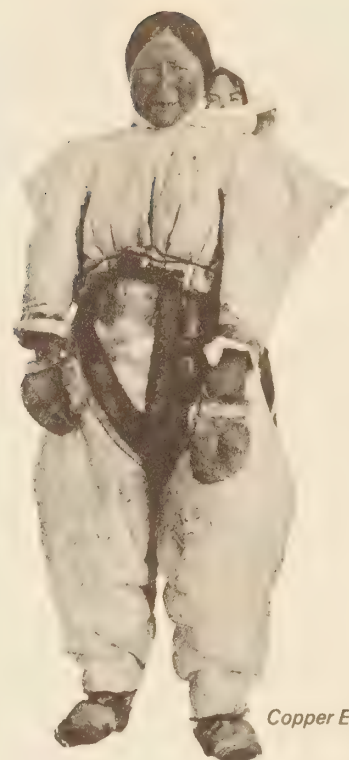
*Iroquois cradleboard*  
NMC 71645



*Cradle for flattening child's head, Northwest Coast*  
NMC 102574



*Iroquois cradleboard*  
NMC 36071



*Copper Eskimo child in mother's parka*  
NMC 38978

The Eskimo counterpart to the Indian cradle board was the extra large hood on the mother's parka. The baby was carried in the hood, which was closed off at the bottom by a strap fastened around the mother's waist.

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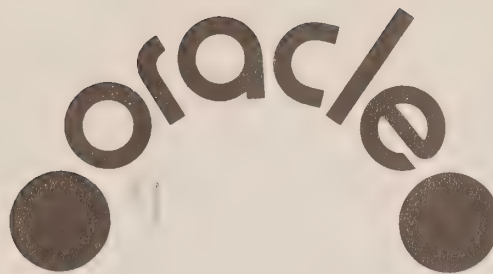
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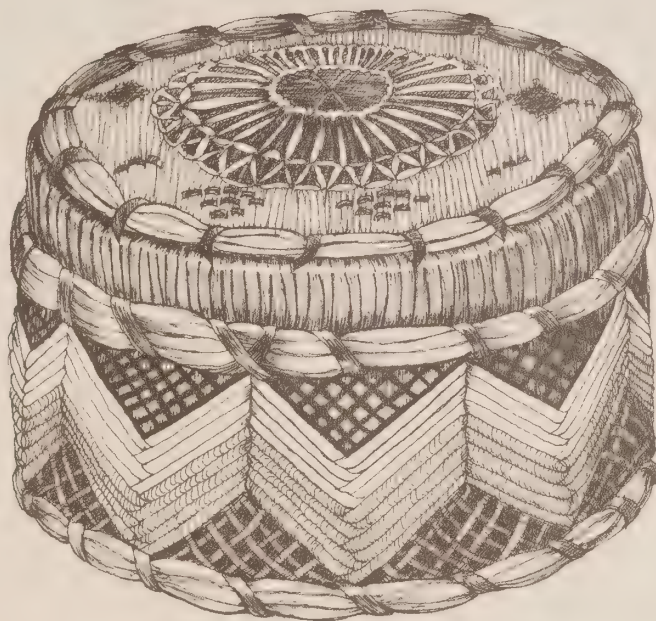


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# THE ALGONKIAN FAMILY



*Micmac quillwork box*

The word *Algonkian* refers to a linguistic family which was one of the most widespread in North America. The Plains and eastern Subarctic forests of Canada were almost exclusively peopled by speakers of Algonkian languages — for example, the Gros Ventre, Blackfoot and Cree on the Prairies; the Cree, Ojibwa, Montagnais and Naskapi tribes of the eastern forests; and the Ojibwa in the upper Great Lakes region. The word *Algonquin* refers to a tribe which is included in the vast language family.

There were many individual differences amongst the tribes that made up the Algonkian family, and their cultures varied as subtly as the changes in landscape from

north to south. A better understanding of the diverse aspects of these varied cultures may be obtained by referring to other fact sheets in this series. Most of the Algonkian speaking people in Canada were hunters and gatherers, with only a few tribes, such as the Malecite (who raised corn) practising a significant amount of agriculture. There were, of course, many differences in the regional adaptations to environment and in the kinds of animals hunted and the kinds of plants gathered. These variations were quite important as they revealed, among other things, the diversity of historical development which the speakers of Algonkian languages had undergone.



*Ojibwa wild rice gathering*

The Blackfoot and the Prairie Cree, for example, were typical of the northern buffalo hunting cultures which were widespread in the Plains. They lived in moveable camps in pursuit of the buffalo herds. Associated with this life-style were a number of social and political structures which were generally characteristic of Plains tribes (see Blackfoot and Cree information sheets).

Like their neighbours of the treeless tundra — the Eskimo — the northern Algonkian Indians of the eastern Subarctic led nomadic lives, fishing the streams and hunting moose, caribou and bear whenever these animals were available. They moved about in small hunting bands of three to four families, hunting and camping together for months at a time. Their hunting activities



*Beothuk canoe*



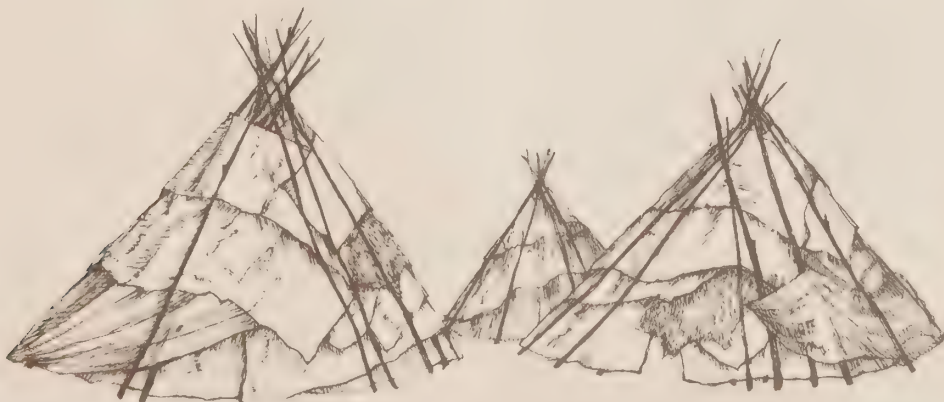


*Cree moccasins*

were supplemented by a wide variety of local specialties, such as the wild rice gathering of the upper Great Lakes tribes and the shell fish collecting of the Micmac and other coastal peoples. The Atlantic Coast Algonkian grew corn, beans and squash as well as many other crops.

Most of the Plains and Subarctic tribes reckoned heritage on both the mother's and the father's sides, but in the Great Lakes area only the father's side was followed. Atlantic Coast peoples more often reckoned descent through the mother. Among most of the Plains and Subarctic groups, as well as those in the Great Lakes area, a newly married couple moved to the home of the groom's parents; but along the Atlantic Coast the couple moved to the home of the bride's parents. Such variations are also found in the political and religious lives of the Algonkian tribes.

The Algonkians were some of the first Indians to experience contact with European explorers and settlers. Their lives were profoundly affected. They played important roles in the colonial histories of both Canada and the United States, and many famous Indian leaders, including Powhatan, Tecumseh, Pontiac and Pocahontas, were Algonkian. Algonkian speaking people were the first to contact the men of the Hudson's Bay Company and they became involved in the fur trade. It was from the Algonkian that Europeans learned to use birch bark canoes; and Europeans were taught how to plant corn by Algonkian Indians in Virginia, in 1586. But in the history of North America it has often been the case that the first to make such contact were also the first to disappear; and so it has been with many Algonkian tribes, although there are still many Algonkian speakers active in Canada today.



*Birch bark and skin wigwams*

Naskapi Indian with coat,  
mittens and pouch



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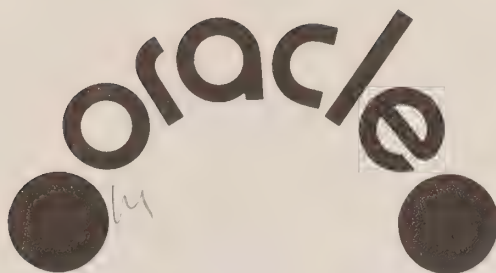
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# THE BEOTHUK

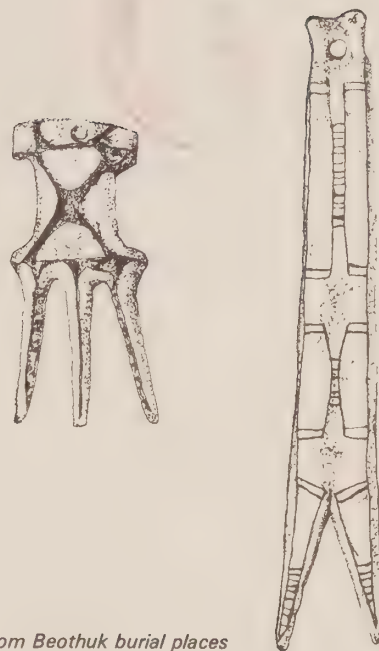
The extinct Beothuk Indians were a mysterious tribe of aboriginal people who lived in part of what is now Newfoundland. Very little is known about the Beothuk, although various ethnologists (including Albert Gatschet, a 19th century ethnologist and the late James P. Howley, the foremost authority in Newfoundland on their culture) believe that they were a people of themselves, apart and distinct from all other Indians whom we know.

European fishermen who settled around the shores of the island in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries resented them, possibly because of petty pilfering, and shot them down at every opportunity; the French placed a bounty on their heads; and the Micmac Indians who crossed over into Newfoundland in the 18th century hunted them down relentlessly. The Beothuk retreated into the isolated interior of the island, resisting all contact with white men. Their chief habitat in historic times was the drainage basin of the Exploits River and the shores of Notre Dame Bay and White Bay.

The language of these people was never well recorded and it has been suggested that they spoke two or three dialects of a common tongue — possibly of the Algonkian language family. The entire tribe was thought to number not more than about 500 people when Cabot discovered Newfoundland in 1497. It is known that the Beothuk worshipped the sun, which they call *Kuis*.

Newfoundland is covered with dense forests, and contains numerous lakes and rivers. Summers are usually pleasant, but winters are long and very cold. The Beothuk lived by hunting, fishing, and by gathering wild plants. Deer, salmon, fowl and shellfish were important foods in their diet. They also speared seals in the open ocean with harpoons, a practice they probably borrowed from the Eskimos to the north. It is known that the Beothuk relished a certain kind of bird's egg which they got from one of the offshore islands. They lived a nomadic

*Decorated bone from Beothuk burial places*



life, moving from one place to another to find enough food; but because they were isolated on their island, their habits and customs differed from those of the mainland Indians. Snowshoes were used in winter.

The Beothuk were very skillful canoeists. The forests supplied birch bark to cover their canoes, which were 4.80 m to 6.00 m in length, with an upward curve towards each end. Laths were introduced from stern to stern instead of planks, and each gunwale presented the outline of a pair of crescent moons.

Wigwams, which they called *Mamateek*, were also covered with birch bark. They were usually rectangular in shape and had sleeping trenches inside, lined with fir or pine needles. Birch bark containers were used for storing dried food and also as water buckets, drinking cups and cooking utensils. There is no evidence that they knew how to make pottery or that they had metal, soapstone or wooden implements. The bow and arrow, club and spear, were everyday necessities — useful for hunting and for defence.

Not very much is known about the social organization of the Beothuk. It is likely that they lived in small bands made up of closely related families. They gathered together during the fall when many migrating caribou were taken by communal effort in large impounds or deer fences. This was their time for feasting and for rituals. They painted their bodies with red dye made from a root, or with red ochre. This was done for religious reasons as well as for protection against insects. The Beothuk, therefore, became known as the "Red Indians".

The Beothuk, gradually forced into the interior of the island by European fishermen and settlers, were reduced in numbers. Some were killed by the Europeans and

others by Micmac hunters, equipped with firearms, who invaded Newfoundland in the 18th century. The Beothuk had only bows and arrows with which to retaliate. Although it is possible that a few escaped to Labrador to live among other Indian groups, the last known Beothuk woman, who was called Shanawdithit, died in captivity "of Consumption" in St. John's, Newfoundland, in 1829. With her death the "Red Indian" became extinct.

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*Beothuk canoe*

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# THE INDIAN CALENDAR

Before Europeans arrived in North America, the Indians and the Eskimo recognized the phases of the moon for counting months. They had not however developed systems of counting and writing suitable to the development of a calendar such as that in use today. The first tribal calendars were often notched sticks on which the long, dark days of winter were counted.

Most tribes divided the year into lunar months, which were named for significant economic or religious events.

The Haida of the Northwest Coast of what is now British Columbia divided the year into twelve lunar months, which were adjusted periodically, because the lunar year is shorter than the solar year. The position of the sun's rays was noted each morning at dawn; it was traced in charcoal on the floor of the house so that in the course of a year, a line was formed. According to the Nootka people, a moon began with the appearance of the first quarter, not with the dark of the moon, as in our system.

Simple calendars consisted of lunar months which were named; these names were passed on orally to each new generation. The moon count was of a descriptive nature, with the name of each month referring to natural phenomena, such as fish runs, flights of waterfowl and the like.

Hunting and gathering societies lived in different camps at different times of the year in order to take advantage of as many economic resources as possible. The combined movements of such a society are called the annual cycle. It was in connection with such annual cycles that lunar months were often named. Even among peoples lacking a concept of counting by the moon, however, yearly changes in the seasons were observed, and usually quite closely studied. Agricultural societies, in contrast, often divided the year into periods important to the growing of the crops, so that planting, cultivating, and harvesting seasons were emphasized. Such divisions might be marked by large ceremonies and feasts. The summer and winter solstices were usually regarded as significant and ceremonies were often held to mark

them. Such considerations, which are behind the development of most of the calendars in the world, played an important role in the formation of our own.



*Beans Ripening*

The Iroquoian year had twelve months based on the appearance of new moons. When there was a year with thirteen moons, the extra moon was included in one of the winter months. The whole system depended on the movement of the group of seven stars, the Pleiades. The new year began when these stars reached their zenith in the northern sky, usually in late January: the first moon following marked the new year.

The setting of the Pleiades in April was a signal to women that the planting season should begin. The spring and summer months were the busiest for both ceremonial and subsistence activities. When the Pleiades rose again in August it was time to harvest the crops.



*Frogs Peeping*

Each stage of the agricultural year was marked by one or more ceremonies.

Approximate time	Name of period	
December-January	Gaya'da-gó: wah	Big Doll
January-February	Ganráhtahgah	Late Falling Leaves
February-March	Ganoskwaótha'	Frogs Peeping
March-April	Ganoskwaótha'-gó: wah	Many Frogs Peeping
April-May	Ganá'gaht	Prepare Corn Hills
May-June	Hyeikhneh	Berries Ripening
June-July	Hyeikhne-gó: wah	Many Berries Ripening
July-August	Iskhné: ha'	Beans Ripening
August-September	Iskhne-gó: wah	Many Things Ripening
September-October	Sa:khné: hat	Almost Mature
October-November	Sa:khne-gó: wah	Everything Mature
November-December	Jotho:'	Cold



*Late Falling Leaves*



*Berries Ripening*

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# BUFFALO HUNTING

Before Europeans arrived in North America, the Prairies and Plains supported seemingly endless herds of bison, which are usually referred to as buffalo. The herds were huge, and millions of great shaggy buffalo grazed and roamed over the grasslands. In the Eastern Woodlands and in the boreal forests of the Subarctic however, there were several woodland species of buffalo which were so solitary in their habits that they had to be hunted individually.

On the Plains and Prairies the large herds were hunted during the months of June, July and August, when the meat was at its best. A number of communal techniques (used for other game animals as well) were required, often involving the entire village. All of the techniques called for the herding of the buffalo and the stampeding of the herd in a desired direction. On the Prairies the long grasses were set on fire on all sides of the herd except that side on which the waiting hunters lay in



*Buffalo hunting on horseback NMC 81456*

ambush. As the buffalo fled the flames, they were quickly shot with arrows. On the Plains, buffalo were often herded into an enclosure or stampeded over a cliff. These two techniques could be combined by building an enclosure, or corral, at the base of a slope and driving the buffalo downhill into the trap. The enclosure was made by putting up walls of sticks and brush to form a circle, leaving an opening on one side from which long, straight walls extended which gradually diverged from the enclosure. Men and women would line up as extensions of these walls, waving robes or blankets to hasten the buffalo along the path to the corral. If the cliff was high enough, the enclosure was not necessary as the buffalo were injured or killed by the drop. These techniques were used by the Cree, Assiniboiné, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, Crow and other tribes.

Driving buffalo required careful co-operation by all the participants, and the fate of the entire village usually depended upon the success of the hunt. Elaborate rituals, closely linked with religious rites, were performed in preparation for the event, and everyone was instructed to carry out his tasks in such a way that the buffalo would not detect the hunters until it was too late to escape. Members of special warrior societies policed the hunt, and anyone who broke the rules and thereby endangered the success of the drive was severely punished.

New techniques became important with the introduction of the horse, for these drives were even more effective when the hunters were mounted. On horseback they could surround the buffalo herd, make the animals mill about, and shoot them one by one with bows and arrows.

Individual techniques were also highly developed on the Plains and Prairies. A skillful hunter could stalk a buffalo and sneak within range of his bow to make a kill. Often such hunters disguised themselves with a wolfskin until close enough to shoot. The Arapaho and Assiniboiné hunted buffalo during the winter months on snowshoes; they were able to run down the buffalo because the

animals floundered in the snow. Several men would often co-operate in that kind of chase.

The importance of the buffalo to the people of the Plains and Prairies cannot be overestimated. No part of the animal was wasted. The meat was roasted or boiled and eaten on the spot by the villagers and their dogs, or else it was carefully preserved to make it last through the winter. It kept its nutritive value for months and even years. The skins were tanned and made into clothing, blankets and lodge coverings and untanned skins were used in making saddles and bridles, thongs and other bindings. The animals' horns were fashioned into spoons and drinking cups, the bones into scrapers and other implements, and the brains and liver were used in the tanning process. Even the sinew was used for sewing, and the feet and hoofs boiled to make glue for attaching arrow heads to their shafts. Halters and ties were plaited from the long hair of the head and shoulders, and the tail was used as a fly swat. Buffalo dung was gathered and used as fuel for cooking fires.

The buffalo was the mainstay of the plains tribes; it can be said that it was the centre of their existence. It seems that nowhere else in North America was there such a complete reliance on a single species of animal. Even the Indians of the eastern margins of the Plains and Prairies considered the buffalo a major source of food to supplement their agricultural activities.

Buffalo hunting is known to have been a major activity for at least 10,000 years in the Plains, and the Indians had probably developed a suitable ecological balance between the size of the herds and their hunting.

With the introduction of the rifle however, the increased killing power of both Indians and white men (with their market for hides) exerted more pressure upon the herds, already imperiled by changes in the climate, than they could bear. Today there are only a few small herds left out of the millions of buffalo that roamed the plains up to the 1870s.

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*Buffalo hunting on snowshoes*

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## Northwest Coast Indians:

# POTLATCH

The potlatch was a great feast of the Northwest Coast Indians at which the clan or lineage chief gave gifts to the invited guests. The word *potlatch*, from the Chinook trade jargon, means giving. All of the guests acted as witnesses to the event as well as judges and in this way the social system, with its many inherited rights and privileges at birth, puberty, marriage and death, was maintained and validated. An individual of social standing could only begin to use his titles and privileges after they had been publicly proclaimed at a potlatch.

A chief's prestige depended on the accumulation of wealth that was then given away at a potlatch; status

came with the disposing of wealth, not with the accumulation and owning of it. A surplus in excess of need was the key to social standing. It was expected that those who held important titles would give great potlatches. If they failed to do so in the eyes of the guests, both the title holder and his group lost prestige. It was therefore to the advantage of the entire group to work hard to ensure the success of the potlatch. The preparation of the feast and the collecting of the gifts and food often extended over a long period of time and the people had to agree with the status that their leader was seeking. No one who was part of the group sponsoring the potlatch could receive gifts at it.



Potlatch traditional dance



*Woman wearing labret*

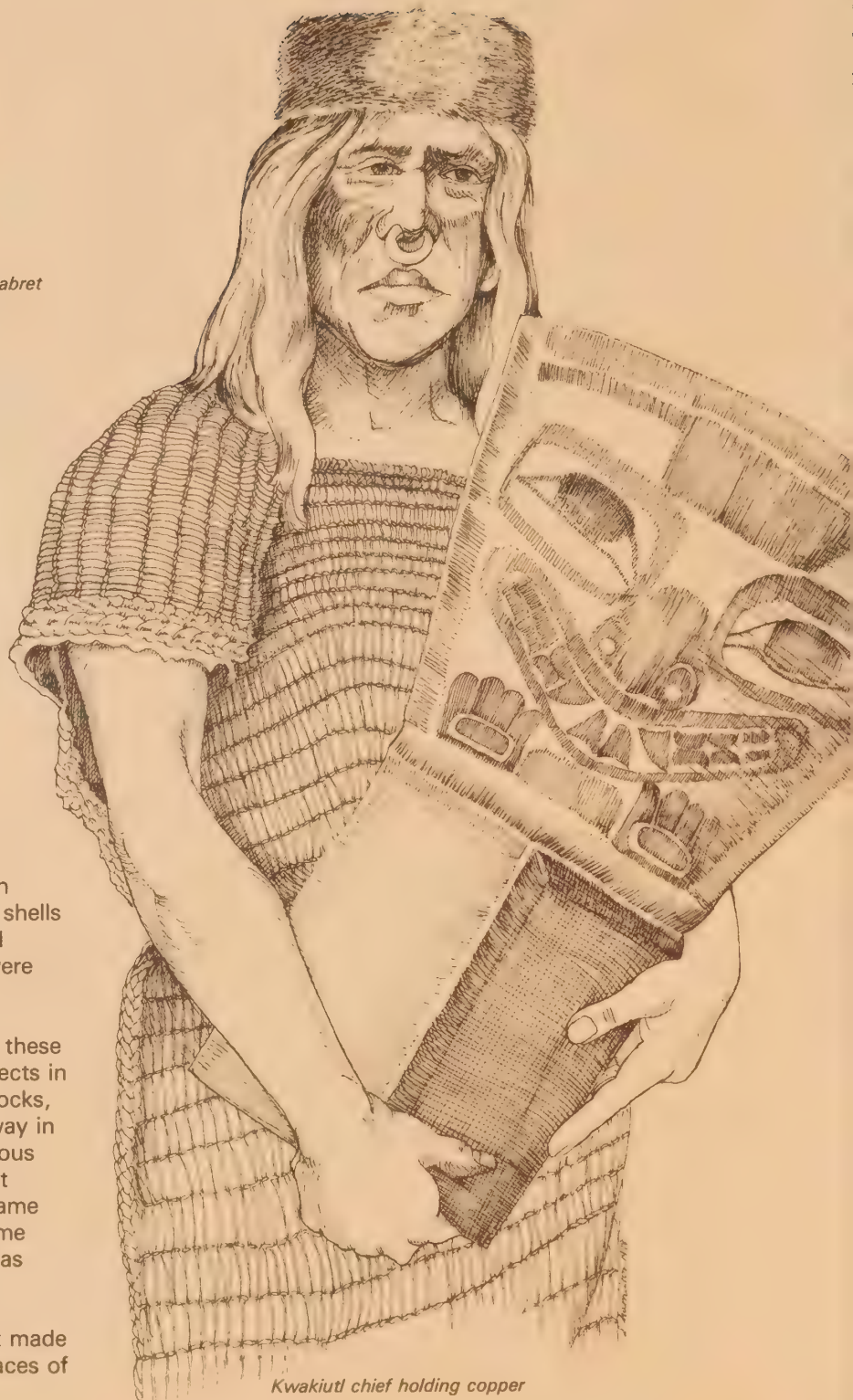


*Labret*

Traditional gifts included beautifully carved wooden objects such as feast bowls and spoons, furs, rare shells and hand-woven blankets. After the traders arrived woollen blankets and other manufactured goods were used.

The potlatch was encouraged by the availability of these cheap manufactured goods and the number of objects in each gift category increased. Sewing machines, clocks, tables, shawls, and china basin sets were given away in quantity beyond ordinary needs. The most prestigious item of wealth was the copper, a ceremonial object made of sheet copper. Each copper had its own name such as "Cause of Fear" or "Means of Strife"; some coppers became quite famous and reached values as high as 16,000 blankets.

Only the nobles took part in the performances that made up the potlatch ceremony. They were seated in places of



*Kwakiutl chief holding copper*



honour according to their rank and received gifts relative to their status. The guests noted the value of their gifts in relation to those that others received at the same event to be sure they were accorded proper recognition. The festive food and some of the potlatch goods were shared afterwards by the entire group of Indians, for regardless of their social status they were all witnesses.

The Coast Salish used a method of distributing goods to the commoners that was known as the scramble. Goat wool robes, for example, were torn into strips and tossed into the crowd, rather than being distributed in a more orderly way.

Potlatch forms varied according to the regions and the nature of the occasions that they commemorated. They could be held outdoors or indoors, sometimes in the spring or in the winter; some were confined to local villagers, and others included outsiders; some lasted a few days and others a few weeks.

Economic motives may have been behind many of the potlatches. If a village suffered the tragedy of losing its fish traps in a flood before the salmon run, a neighbouring village at another stream might give a potlatch in which guests could make up some of their loss. The host village would expect a return potlatch if it suffered a similar experience.

On the northern part of the coast the major potlatches were limited to mortuary rites for important chiefs. In such cases the potlatch served to honour the dead chief and to confirm his heir's right to the title. The funeral duties were performed by people outside the clan or lineage and they were paid for their services.

Potlatches were also held at the completion of a new house, and at the raising of a totem pole. A chief might give a potlatch as a face-saving presentation if he felt he had lost prestige for some reason. If he had tripped or fallen on a formal occasion, if he had been shown an inferior seat at a potlatch, or if he had been captured in war, his only recourse to wipe away the affront was by publicly reaffirming his title and status and by giving away valuable gifts.

Another type of potlatch, the rivalry potlatch, was a late development and seems to have been limited to the Kwakiutl Indians. Two rivals would potlatch until one became destitute. Sometimes the actual destruction of property seemed necessary and canoes were smashed, money thrown into the fire, ceremonial coppers broken, slaves killed and insults flung. The ceremonial atmosphere of the potlatch was replaced by bitterness, all to humiliate a rival. The cause for such rivalry might



*Goatwool robe as worn*

be personal hostility or an unclear claim for succession. Succession rights became a problem as European diseases such as smallpox and measles killed whole villages up and down the coast in the last century, and the lines of descent for titles and privileges became confused.

In 1884 the potlatch was banned by law as a result of the disapproval of missionaries and government officials who were unable to understand why such hard working and energetic people should 'waste' their resources. The giving of potlatches in secret continued however, until a number of Indians were sent to prison in 1921 and their masks and regalia confiscated. In 1951 the law was repealed and the holding of potlatches has since been revived, usually in connection with the raising of memorial totem pole.



*Distribution of wealth at potlatch*

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Northwest Coast Indians:

MASKS



*One horned mountain goat. Dancer from 'Ksan*

From the artistic standpoint masks offer the greatest sculptural variety of Northwest Coast art. The masks, whether depicting human or animal figures give a glimpse of the supernatural world which was mirrored by the Indian people when they wore them at their ceremonies. The sea, rivers, and forests were inhabited by spirits that took various forms. A face was provided for every object in the material world, whether animate or inanimate; elements such as the sun, moon and wind were portrayed with human faces. The painting on the masks and their themes, ranging from detailed realism to supernatural monsters, are executed in a style that has been compared favourably with the great art of Ancient Egypt and China.

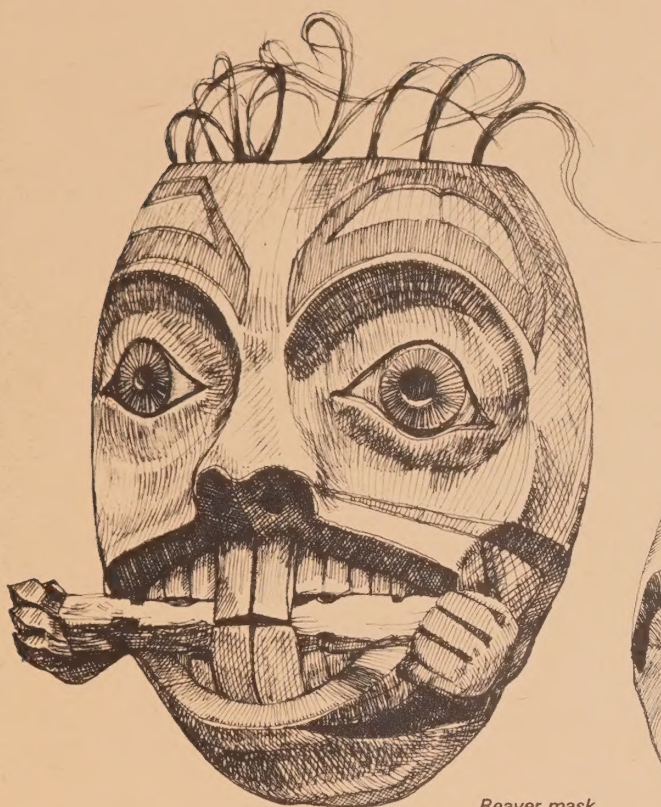
There are three main categories of masks. The clan masks were representations of the clan or crest animals and were worn at feasts and potlatches. The Secret Society masks were worn only at the time of the winter initiation dances. Shaman masks belonged to the men and women who functioned as the media of communication between the people and the spirit world. Each shaman carved his own set of masks; the meanings were known only to him and they were buried with him.

Mask making was an important activity by the time the Europeans arrived in the late 1700s. It was a recognized specialty and the artists worked with tools fitted with blades of stone or shell. Beaver teeth were used for the

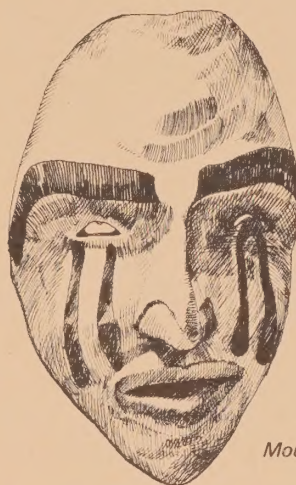


*Man carving beaver mask*





*Beaver mask*



*Mourning mask*



*Swaive mask*

fine carving and dogfish skin for the final sanding. The woods used were red or yellow cedar, spruce, hemlock, maple and alder wood. Most masks were worn over the face, but some were made to be worn on the forehead. Once metal tools were introduced by the fur traders, the carvers were able to work at greater speed and produce more pieces, though the style remained basically unaltered. There are two known examples of stone masks, collected in the last century from two different villages. There is no documentation as to how they were worn or for what occasion but they still invoke a sense of power even to the uninitiated. The blind mask is in the National Museum of Man, Ottawa and the sighted mask is in the Musée de l'Homme, Paris. Often the exact significance of the mask was lost or was known only to the owner.

In the post-contact period, commercial paints replaced the old natural dyes and pigments, but the traditional colour selection remained the same. The old colours were red ochre (red), charcoal (black), clam shells (white), and copper oxide (blue-green). These materials were ground up and mixed with an oily base of salmon roe or other fish eggs squeezed through a cedar bark sack.

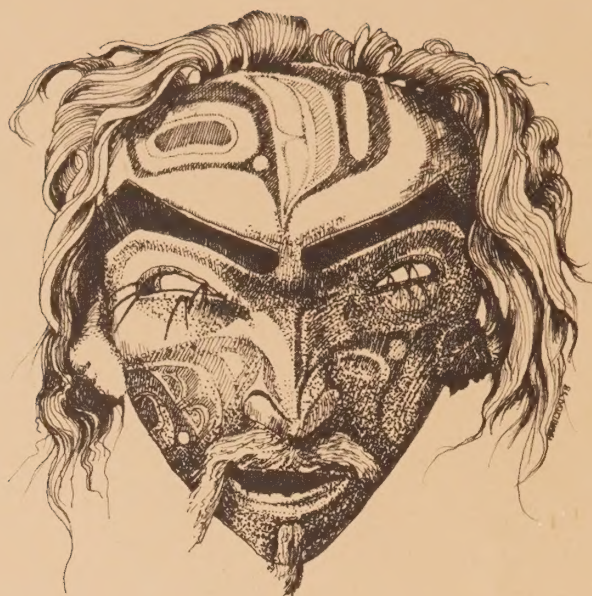
Designs similar to the motifs that people painted on their faces were applied to masks in the northern part of the

coast. In the southern area, particularly among the Kwakiutl, the painted areas emphasized and complemented the sculpted forms. The carvings were decorated with fur, human hair, inlaid abalone shell and other shells, sea-lion whiskers, feathers and copper. Other items were used for special effects: for example black or white china door knobs were used for eyes that appeared and disappeared behind moving eye lids. Movable parts on the masks were common and reached their ultimate form in the transformation mask; painted canvas and leather thongs, cleverly integrated into the mask, allowed the wearer to startle the audience when the outer mask would split apart to reveal another, different inner face. Simple ties held most light masks in place, while the larger, heavy ones required a head cap, shoulder supports or a stick strapped to the waist.

Among the most important of the traditional ceremonies were the winter dances performed in the great communal plank houses where the whole village participated as either dancers or spectators. The masked dancers brought to life the native mythology which varied among the different coastal tribes. The dramas were skillfully presented with humorous interludes when fool masks appeared and reduced the tension of the performances.

Fine realistic portrait masks were the specialty of the Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian in the northern area. On





Human face mask

Vancouver Island the Nootka have been associated with the wolf mask since Captain Cook collected the first ones in 1778. Their Kwakiutl neighbours specialized in fantastic bird monsters and supernatural beings associated with a cannibal spirit. A mask that was unique to the Salish in the south but which spread to other areas was the Swaixwe, a mythical sky bird who came down to earth and lived in the lakes up the Fraser River. It was worn by men called healers who danced in the stalk-eyed masks at curing, birth, naming and marriage ceremonies.

People of high status had special privileges, one of which was the exclusive right to wear certain family masks and to perform the dances associated with them. During the funeral rites for an important chief, dancers wore masks that had been owned by the dead man and members of the family wore mourning masks. Some masks had incorporated into the design lines of copper strips placed under the eyes, representing tears streaming down the cheeks.

To-day there are many native craftsmen creating masks in the Northwest Coast style. Many of these are comparable in design and execution to the museum pieces collected in the last century. The Gitksan carvers of the

'Ksan Carving School at Hazelton on the Skeena River are still carving masks of the One Horned Mountain Goat of Temlaham, featured in their origin myth of long ago.

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